DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 164 112 PS 010 300

TITLE	Barriers to School Breakfast.
INSTITUTION	Children's Foundation, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Community Services Administration (DHEW), Washington, D.C.; Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Nov 78
NOTE	107p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Children's Foundation, 1028 Connecticut Avenue, N. W., Suite 1112, Washington, D.C. 20036 ($3.00; bulk rates available upon request)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$6.01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Attitudes; *Breakfast Programs; Community Attitudes; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Programs; Government Role; Nutrition; *Program Administration; *Program Descriptions; *Program Planning; School Responsibility; School Role; Social Change; Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS	*School Breakfast Program

ABSTRACT

The School Breakfast Program described in this booklet was legislated by Congress and implemented nationwide in public and non-profit private schools by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The first chapter of the booklet presents a narrative summary of research data that support the need for school breakfasts. The second chapter discusses the historical background of the program and describes the program's administration and funding procedures. The third chapter details problems in implementing the program, such as costs of teacher supervision, lack of adequate eating facilites, lack of student participation, and other problems. Prejudices and arguments raised against the program are outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents summaries of selected school breakfast programs in 10 states: Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Wisconsin. The final chapter provides recommendations for fostering school breakfast programs at the national, state, and local levels. Appendices describe one successful breakfast program in Great Falls, Montana, and present tabular statistics on student participation in selected lunch and breakfast programs. (SE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

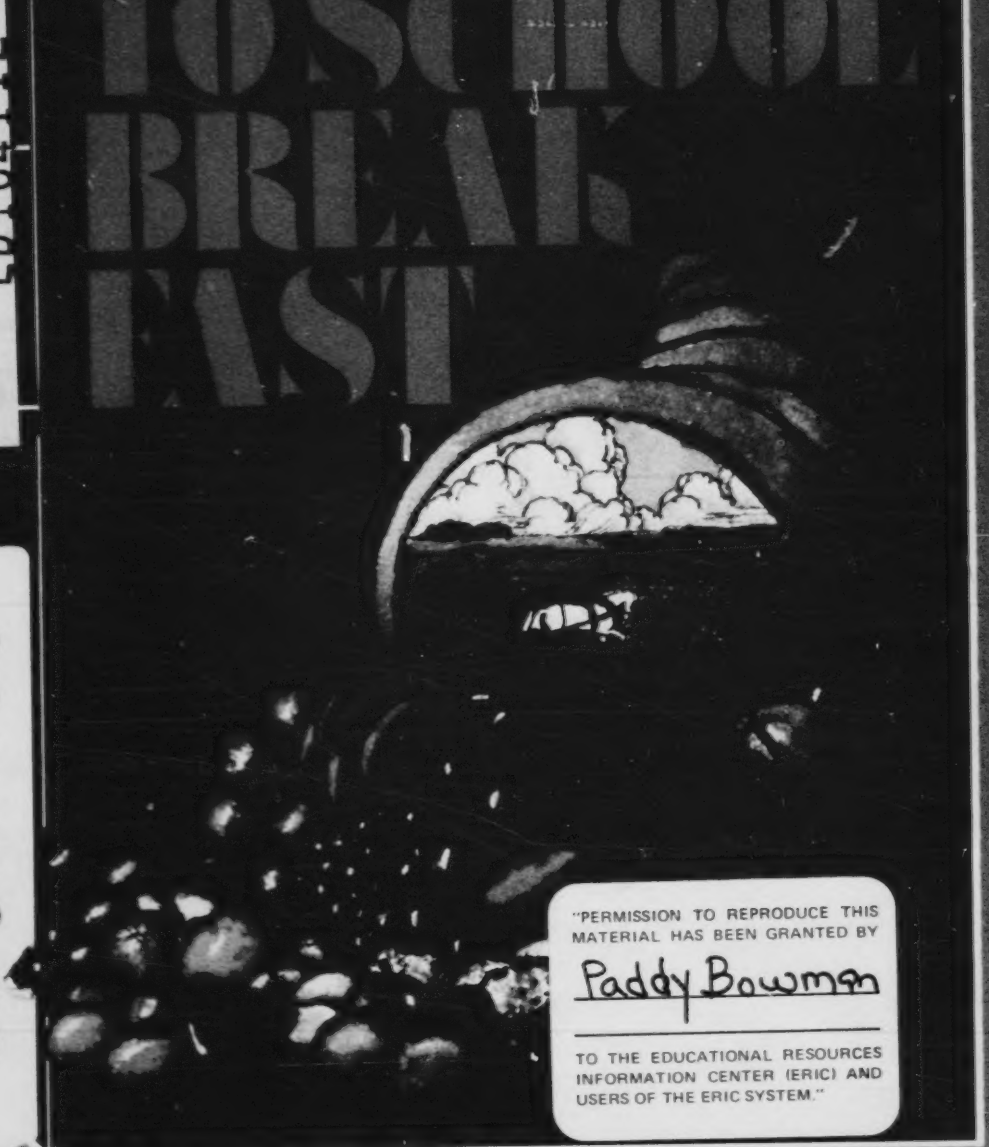
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED164112

PS010300

BARRIERS TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST



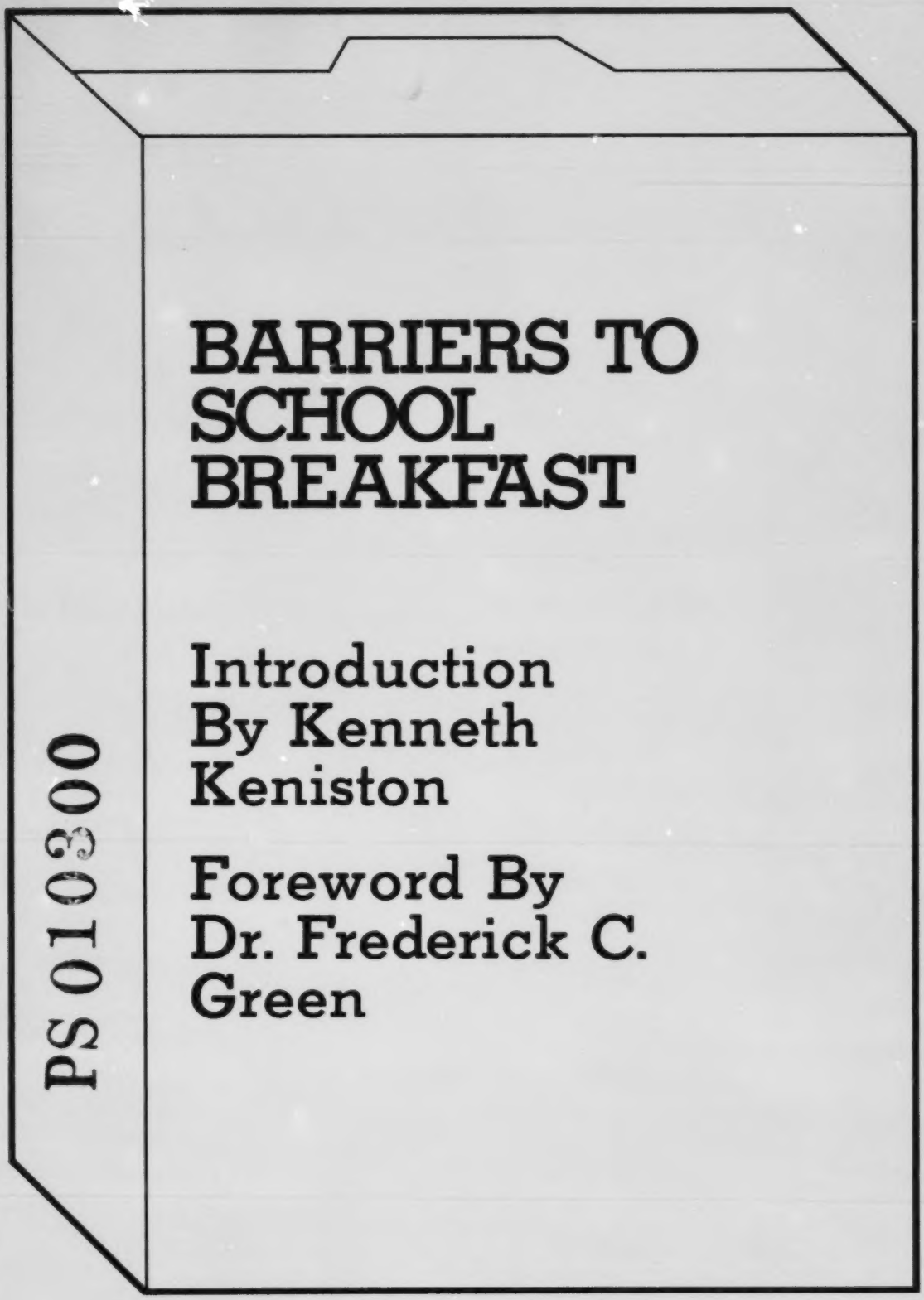
"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Paddy Bowman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

2

A REPORT FROM THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION



BARRIERS TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST

Introduction By Kenneth Keniston

Foreword By Dr. Frederick C. Green

PS 010300

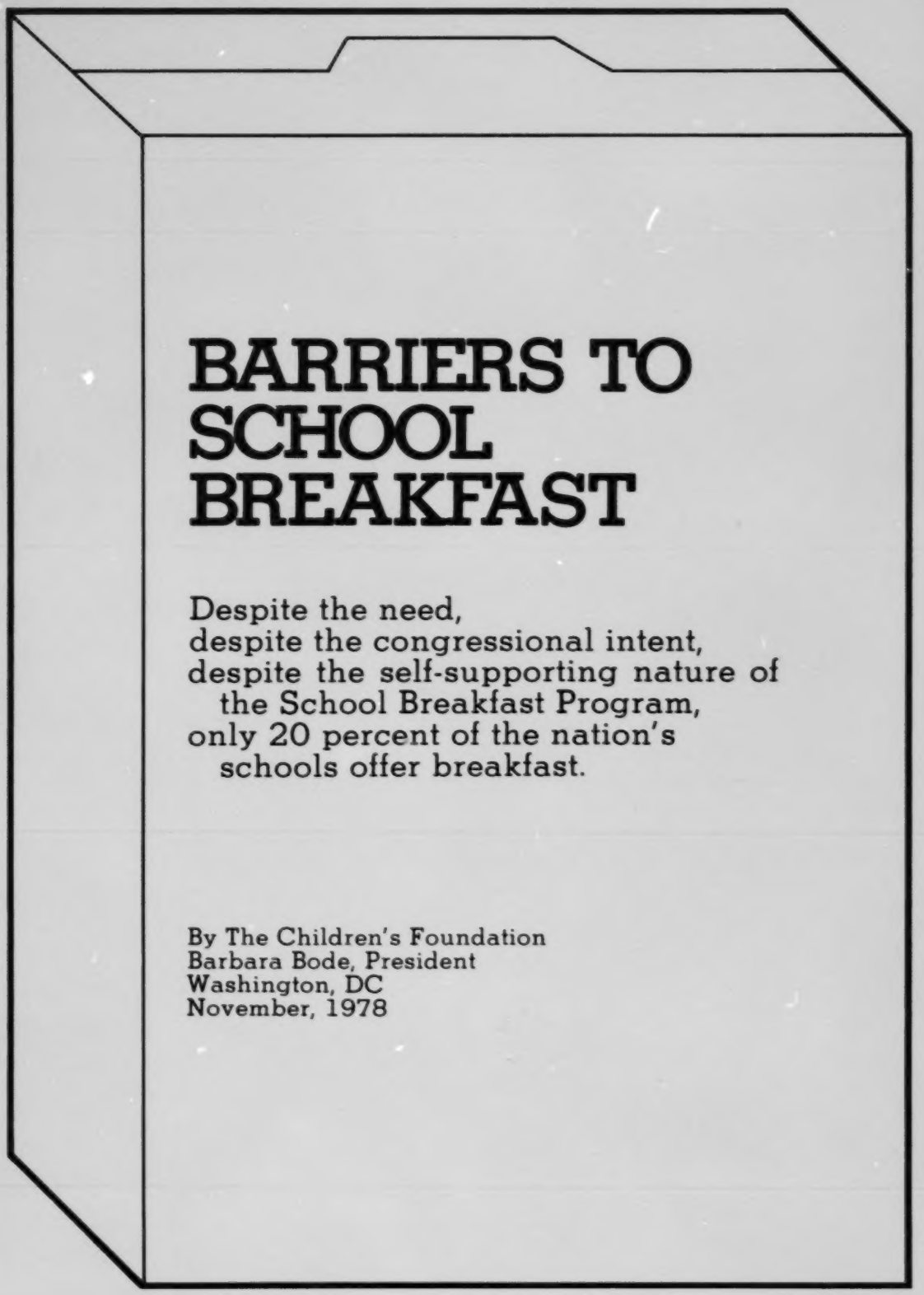
ERRATA

On page 20, paragraph one, line 12, it should be noted that Congress has appropriated $26.2 million for nutrition education, not one million dollars.

On page 36, paragraph three, line three, 28.2 million school children had working mothers in 1975, not 71 million children.

Barriers to School Breakfast

The Children's Foundation
1028 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 1112
Washington, DC 20036



BARRIERS TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST

Despite the need,
despite the congressional intent,
despite the self-supporting nature of the School Breakfast Program,
only 20 percent of the nation's schools offer breakfast.

By The Children's Foundation
Barbara Bode, President
Washington, DC
November, 1978

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

John Kramer, Chair
Georgetown University Law School
Washington, D.C.

Topper Carew
Rainbow Television Workshop
Los Angeles, California

Pablo Eisenberg
Center for Community Change
Washington, D.C.

Jean Fairfax
NAACP Legal Defense & Education Fund
New York, New York

Maya Miller
American Friends Service Committee
Carson City, Nevada

Walter Pozen
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan
Washington, D.C.

Kenneth Wooden
National Coalition for Children's Justice
Princeton, New Jersey

THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

The Children's Foundation was established in 1969 as a national, nonprofit advocacy center for poor children and their families in the struggle against hunger in the United States. We concentrate our efforts upon achieving fully responsive food assistance programs at the national, state and local levels. Our efforts include review and analysis of the federal food programs, technical assistance to community groups working to improve or establish programs, distribution of our numerous fact sheets, newsletters and other publications to a wide variety of individuals and organizations and advocacy of both short and long range solutions to problems of hunger and malnutrition in America.

The Foundation is based in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in Atlanta, Georgia, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Pierre, South Dakota. Our work is supported by grants from foundations, churches and the Community Services Administration.

Copyright © November, 1978
The Children's Foundation

Library of Congress Catalog Number 78-71202

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Copies of this report are available from:

The Children's Foundation
1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1112
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 296-4450

Price: $3.00. Bulk rates are available upon request.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix
Preface xi
Foreword xiii
Introduction 1

1

The Need for School Breakfast 5

2

How It Began and How It Works 9

3

The Obstacle Course 15
1. Finances 16
2. Time and Bus Schedules 20
3. Supervision 22
4. Facilities 24
5. All or None 26
6. Initiative 27
7. Participation 28

4

Prejudices Against School Breakfast 33
1. The Good Old Days 34
2. Home vs. School 35
3. The School's Proper Role 37
4. Needy Who? 41
5. The Undeserving Parent 44

5

Target Profiles 47
Arizona 47
Connecticut 49
Maine 52
Massachusetts 54
Montana 57
Nebraska 60
Ohio 62
Oregon 65
South Carolina 69
Wisconsin 71

6

Recommendations 75
At the National Level 76
At the State Level 82
At the Local Level 84
Footnotes 87
APPENDIX I. A Success Story 89
APPENDIX II. Tables 93

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks go to many—first of all, to those people all over the United States who gave us their time and responded so cooperatively to our questions.

To James Kelly of the Education Division of the Ford Foundation for his infinite patience.

To Graciela Olivarez, Director of the Community Services Administration, for her strong support.

To Mary Williams and Frances Barrett for their questionnaire design.

To Anne Meadows, Paddy Bowman, Llewellyn Bensfield, Lucia New and Mollie Gregory for their compilation of the interviews, their writing and their editorial skills.

To Margaret Lorber, Martin Sorensen, Hertha Gross, Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald, Barbara Lee, Joanne Williams, Sharman Green, Barbara Zang and Kay Hollestelle for their technical assistance.

To Gloria Wilkinson and Mary Roberts for their production work.

To Leif Skogstad and Nancy Harrell for their design and layout.

To J. Daniel Johnson, Kathy Jungjohann and Annie Lunsford for their cover design, production and illustration.

This report was made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Community Services Administration. The opinions expressed herein should not be construed as representing the opinions or policies of either.

PREFACE

Breakfast for hungry children. The thought that our children start off their lives, as well as each school day, well fed is hardly radical or diabolical. Yet, the suggestion that as a nation we take steps to ensure that youngsters are properly nourished is fiercely opposed, as by the South Carolina elementary school principal who told us, "I'd rather go to hell than run a breakfast program."

For almost ten years, The Children's Foundation has tried to overcome this go-to-hell attitude toward school breakfast programs; it has been one of our most frustrating experiences. Despite the federal law passed 12 years ago establishing the School Breakfast Program at virtually no cost to local schools, only 20 percent of the nation's schools offer breakfast. As a result, school breakfast remains a missed opportunity at a time when the proportion of children living in poverty in the United States is even greater than it was in 1970.

In the face of this inertia, The Children's Foundation decided to assess the dimensions of resistance. With assistance from the Ford Foundation and the Community Services Administration, we interviewed 120 educators, administrators and food service personnel in ten states—Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina and Wisconsin. In the 25 cities we visited, 409 schools had lunch programs, 229 had both lunch and breakfast and four had no school food programs at all. Three of the states had laws requiring that breakfast be available in schools meeting certain criteria, and three had school lunch laws.

What did we find out? Basically this: For some, school breakfast does not seem practical; it costs too much, requires "impossible" changes in daily schedules, demands excessive paperwork and so on. For others, some of whom advance these practical objections disingenuously, school breakfast "just isn't right." Administrators in one city told us of an official who died of a heart attack when his state's legislature passed a

breakfast law of its own. The story may be apocryphal, but many of those we interviewed object to school breakfast almost that seriously, believing that it violates our basic principles of child rearing and education. Finally, we learned that the barriers to school breakfast are not just at the local and state levels. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, school breakfast's sponsoring agency, has "failed to provide leadership for implementation," according to many of our respondents.

We believe that school breakfast is as un-American as healthy, productive children. "It's the best thing the federal government has done," a second South Carolina principal told us. And it is *not* impossible to establish. We discovered many communities have overcome their problems simply by trying a little harder. Beyond this, of course, the federal breakfast law should be strengthened and USDA should build public support for the program and provide more technical assistance. To follow through is not only to meet our obligations to our children, but to ensure our future national strength, which requires the building of strong bodies and educated minds today.

Barbara Bode
President
The Children's Foundation

FOREWORD

High priority has always been placed upon the safety and nurture of the young by all living creatures, to assure the perpetuation and integrity of their kind. Humankind is not unique in this regard. The provision of food and the teaching of survival skills have always been interrelated. Without the former, the latter is seriously impaired.

These concepts are no less valid today than they were in past ages. In today's society, survival skills can be equated with the educational process. Moreover, in today's society, because of increasing numbers of single-parent, mother-headed families and increasing participation of women in the work force, extra-familial nurture of the young has become increasingly prevalent. Thus, the greater society, having accepted the concept of collective responsibility for the welfare of its young, particularly in those instances where parents are unable or unwilling to provide the necessary care, has found it necessary to make available and to provide many services that were primarily the responsibility of the family in past years.

The subject of this report is the School Breakfast Program, a critically needed program legislated by Congress and implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Critical defects, both in the law and its implementation, are carefully examined and a number of thoughtful and reasonable recommendations are made.

As a pediatrician concerned with the health and welfare of the whole child, within the context of the family, I find arguments that the School Breakfast Program is in some way anti-family, or intrusive on or destructive to family stability, to be uncommonly

unrealistic. Basically, this program's purpose is simply to make breakfast available for those who are in need of this meal. Mandatory participation, by all or any children, is neither implicit nor explicit. Participation is always voluntary and at the request of the family. From my perspective, this program, in fact, strengthens family stability and enhances the quality of family life. I share the hope of the authors that this program will be speedily and comprehensively implemented.

Frederick C. Green, M.D.
Commissioner, International
Year of the Child
Associate Director
Children's Hospital
National Medical Center
Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

On the face of it, making it possible for children to have an adequate breakfast before starting school hardly seems like a controversial idea. After all, Americans believe that children should be adequately nourished. Ample evidence indicates that hunger and malnutrition impair school performance. And ours is a country of vast agricultural surpluses, which we export to feed the hungry in other nations.

But as this useful book illustrates, the School Breakfast Program runs headlong into all the obstacles faced by most other programs that try to make better provision for children. Indeed, the School Breakfast Program is a kind of capsule of the fears, prejudices and misunderstandings that have made public commitment to the next generation so faltering.

The legislation that permits schools to serve a nutritious breakfast to students, and to do so at minimal cost to their own budgets, is now on the books. But between legislation and implementation stand a formidable array of roadblocks. Some of these are bureaucratic and practical. School breakfasts do require adjustments in scheduling, though they are rarely as major as opponents fear. They do involve, obviously, getting the breakfasts to the schools, hiring food service workers and teachers to supervise breakfast. Even though the federal government picks up almost the entire tab for the expenses involved, school systems are often reluctant to change, especially if they are not pushed.

But behind these "practical" problems—all of which, this book demonstrates, can be solved—there are deeper fears that sap the will to solve them. One of these is the belief that schools, as educational institutions, have no business feeding children. Never mind that the vast majority of schools serve lunch, and never mind that, as one Ohio school superintendent commented, schools provide free "entertainment for the community" every

Friday night in the form of football, basketball and baseball games. Somehow breakfasts for hungry children still seem an illegitimate demand on an over-burdened institution.

Even more important is the fear that school breakfast programs will somehow "undermine" the family by usurping its feeding role. The fact is, of course, that millions of children from all kinds of families arrive in school each day without an adequate breakfast—a bottle of soda or a candy bar, a pop tart or nothing at all. Most school-aged children today have working mothers, and sometimes these mothers (and fathers) are too pressed to supervise an adequate breakfast. Other families are simply too poor to afford a decent meal. And many parents—working or nonworking, poor or rich—lack information or interest in seeing that their children have a real breakfast before starting the day. The result is that only one in five American children today eats even that modest breakfast defined as "adequate."

This fact, however, is not a *result* of the School Breakfast Program, which does not exist in most schools. Rather, it creates the *need* for these programs. Yet in the peculiar logic familiar to child advocates, a program designed to meet an existing need is accused of creating that need. And those who end up punished by the refusal to serve school breakfasts are not the allegedly negligent parents, but their improperly nourished children.

In addition, the School Breakfast Program faces the problem created by its initial (but now abandoned) focus on "needy" children, which brings down onto the program all of the current politically inspired animus against "welfare" schemes and public "giveaways" to the poor. In fact, inadequate nutrition knows no lines of class and income in modern America: the middle-class third grader who has a soft drink for breakfast is as "needy" as the teenager from a poverty family who has nothing. Yet, because we like to pretend that only "the poor" need community support, schools that draw mostly from middle-class families too often deny the real unmet needs of their children.

Finally, school breakfast opponents often imply that the program is somehow coercive, and therefore

"communistic" or "collectivizing." In fact, the program is elective: parents who want to serve their children a good breakfast at home are under no compulsion to join. Nonetheless, school breakfast programs often fall victim to our national failure to distinguish between social programs that offer and those that coerce.

In many ways the School Breakfast Program is a model program. Designed to meet a demonstrated need of children, it is flexible and elective, imposes no special financial burden on local communities, expects payment from those who can afford to pay and subsidizes low-income children, is potentially available to all, can serve as an important component of more general nutritional education and so on. That a program so well conceived and so much needed should have aroused so much opposition illustrates the misunderstandings that confront all programs to help children.

But even though change is slow, school breakfast programs are nonetheless spreading, and some of the resulting success stories are documented in this book: "insuperable" obstacles quickly overcome by imaginative teachers and parents; opposed administrators who become enthusiastic supporters of good programs; skeptical voters whose fears are allayed once a program is working well. Although this report devotes more space to obstacles than to encouragements, the real successes suggest another point: that most Americans are willing to learn from experience, to put aside entrenched preconceptions when children are at stake. Change for children is often painful, uncertain and slow, but the efforts of child advocates like the authors of this report make it easier, more likely and faster.

Kenneth Keniston
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

1

THE NEED FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST

I get concerned about the future of the nation. People don't recognize what school feeding is all about. They look at the cost more than the benefit. Then they look at USDA's Food and Nutrition Services budget for child feeding and think it's a monster. But, you know, you look at the number of small mouths out there and if you could see all these teeth at once, you are trying to feed a monster—a monster that's in need of it.

School Food Director
Washington, D.C.

Children need the school food programs, as many studies show: *Their Daily Bread* (1968), by the Committee on School Lunch Participation; "Hunger in the Classroom (1973), by the Massachusetts Advocacy Center; "If We Had Ham, We Could Have Ham and Eggs, If We Had

Eggs" (1972), by the Food Research and Action Center; "Needless Hunger: A Report on the School Breakfast Program in Philadelphia" (1975), by the Philadelphia Jaycees, the Philadelphia Nutrition Council and the Welfare Rights Organization. Of the three daily meals, many nutritionists tell us, breakfast is the most important, particularly for growing children. But, no matter who is doing the counting, far too many of our children do not receive a nutritionally adequate breakfast. According to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, up to one-fourth of the school children in this country go to school without eating breakfast.[1] The American Medical Association estimates that only one out of five Americans eats an adequate breakfast.[2]

A 1969 Massachusetts survey showed that only five percent of the children attending that state's public schools ate a good breakfast, that 37 percent ate an insufficient one, and that 18 percent ate nothing at all.[3] In Minnesota, a 1977 survey of 90,000 students revealed that eight percent ate nothing in the morning and 68 percent ate a breakfast of empty calories—soda pop, gum or candy.[4]

We came across other depressing statistics while conducting our interviews across the country. For instance, a local school food director in Maine noticed that participation in breakfast and lunch was heaviest at the beginning of each week. He conducted an informal survey of his students to learn why and was shocked to find that many did not have enough to eat on the weekends. Also, he discovered that more than 1,100 children—over 37 percent of the student body— did not eat breakfast before coming to school and that about seven percent did not have a full meal the evening before the survey. This situation is not unique to Maine. We heard much the same thing in Montana from a cafeteria manager who told us:

> **A lot of children wouldn't even have a hot meal if it weren't for lunch. A lot of the big boys come in on Monday and say, "Give me a lot. I haven't had a hot meal since Friday."**

Breakfast is not simply important to nutrition. It is essential to learning. A child who does not eat breakfast has a diminished capacity for learning and concentrating. A series of experiments reported in 21 scientific papers in professional journals from 1949 to 1960, popularly known as the Iowa Breakfast Studies, found that skipping breakfast results in decreased efficiency in the late morning hours, a reduced work output, slower mental reactions, increased muscular fatigue and a poor attitude toward school work.[5] HEW studies show that hunger "increases a child's nervousness, irritability and disinterest in a learning situation."[6] Seattle's Hunger Action Center found that the school food programs improve health and behavior, increase cheerfulness and attention span and decrease discipline problems and tardiness. A Ford Foundation review of studies on the benefits of the school feeding programs found that "the provision of breakfast may both benefit the student emotionally and enhance his/her capacity to work on school type tasks."[7]

Many respondents in our study spoke of the need for the breakfast program. The state school food director in Maine said, "I'd like to see that every child has a reasonably good breakfast, because the great learning time—proven endlessly—is between 9:00 and 11:30 a.m. You are not going to have children learning if they haven't had a decent meal." A South Carolina principal put it this way, "If we didn't feed some of these kids, they'd be in here under the influence of hunger, just like those we have here under the influence of marijuana and alcohol."

Indeed, some interviewees consider breakfast more important than lunch. A South Carolina food services director told us, "If we're going to keep these students the major part of their waking hours—at the time that they're the hungriest—and bus them long distances, then we need a school breakfast program." Said a western state food director, "We can't expect students to move from 6 p.m. one day to lunch the next without eating! I'm convinced that breakfast is of greater value than lunch."

There are many reasons children may not be eating a good breakfast at home, or any breakfast at all, for that

matter. One is poverty. In 1974, 10.2 million children were members of families living below the federal poverty line, according to the National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth. Many of these families and others above the official poverty line can't afford to feed their children properly.

While some families skimp on breakfast because of limited finances, nutritional deficiency knows no social class. Thanks to the increased accessibility of junk and convenience foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fat, and because of the ignorance of the importance a good breakfast plays in our lives, families facing early bus rides and conflicting schedules often skip the first meal of the day. Others grab something on the go—a pop tart at home or an Egg McMuffin on the road, for example. McDonald's brisk $1.5 million business in breakfast foods each day illustrates just how many people are having it all done for them.[8]

But will a school breakfast program alleviate malnutrition and hunger? The answer, definitely, is "yes." Administrators who had breakfast programs in their schools observed marked differences in children's attitudes and abilities after introduction of the breakfast program. Here are just a few comments:

> **Breakfast is one of the single best things the government has done. I totally support it. You can tell the difference. The kids are more alert, and it pays dividends in the curriculum areas of the school.**
>
> Principal
> South Carolina

> **Over the years, I've seen the eating habits when you do and when you don't have this program, and I've got to support it.**
>
> Assistant Superintendent
> Montana

It was an Ohio school administrator who best summed up the need for school breakfast programs: "An army marches on its stomach and children learn on theirs."

2

HOW IT BEGAN AND HOW IT WORKS

In recognition of the demonstrated relationship between food and good nutrition and the capacity of children to develop and learn, based on the years of cumulative successful experience under the national school lunch program with its significant contributions in the field of applied nutrition research it is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress that these efforts shall be extended, expanded, and strengthened... to meet more effectively the nutritional needs of our children.

The Child Nutrition Act
—1966

The federal government has been in the business of school food since the mid-1930s, when food was distributed to public schools to ease commodity surpluses. During the war years, surpluses disappeared, and the federal government gave the first cash assistance

subsidies to local schools. After the war, schools were encouraged to provide lunch but many were reluctant to start programs for fear of losing federal support in midstream. To alleviate this fear, Congress created the National School Lunch Program in 1946 guaranteeing financial support and setting two conditions: school meals must conform to certain nutritional standards, and the programs must be operated upon a nonprofit basis. The program was and is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Several amendments to the original act have expanded federal assistance, and today 92 percent of the nation's schools participate in the National School Lunch Program.

The School Breakfast Program was initiated as a two-year pilot program by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to reach "schools drawing attendance from areas in which poor economic conditions exist, and to those schools to which a substantial proportion of the children enrolled must travel long distances daily." In its early years, the breakfast program had many problems, the chief ones being the threat of sudden loss of federal financial aid and lack of aggressive support from USDA. While financial support has continued and was made permanent by Congress in 1975, the historic administrative hampering of school breakfast by USDA has continued. When an amendment to the Child Nutrition Act gave special priority to breakfast for the nation's neediest children in early 1971, later that year USDA proposed regulations that would have severely restricted the program. Congress responded with a unanimous resolution that USDA reverse its action, but growth of the breakfast program remained slow. In 1975, when the School Breakfast Program finally became a permanent program with open-ended funding, any school could start a breakfast program and be assured that federal financing would be available.

Both school lunch and school breakfast are administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) division of USDA. Participation at the local level is voluntary. The programs are normally administered in cooperation with state departments of education, but in some cases one of the seven FNS regional offices acts as

the administering office. The duties of FNS include supervising the states' administration of the programs, distributing commodities, reviewing state and local school operations, apportioning funds to the states, providing technical and administrative assistance to the states and establishing standards for nutritious meals.

At the state level, departments of education administer the food programs through state school food offices. Their duties include submitting an annual state plan on child nutrition operations for FNS approval, establishing accounting systems to report on school operations, maintaining records, determining whether financial requirements are being met by local schools, providing schools with monthly information from USDA on food supplies and investigating complaints.

At the local level, schools or school districts operate the food programs and determine which students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. To receive federal funds, each school must be nonprofit, meet USDA nutritional requirements, provide free and reduced-price meals, comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related amendments, use commodities designated as being in abundance, use foods donated by USDA and maintain full, accurate records.

Any public or nonprofit private school can start a breakfast program. The first step is for a local school board to submit an application to the state school food services director. Once the district agrees to abide by the federal laws and regulations governing the program, approval is automatic and breakfast can be started. If start-up costs are involved, a school merely applies for reimbursement. Federal assistance arrives monthly in three forms: (1) cash reimbursements for meals served, (2) commodities and (3) cash for items such as kitchen equipment. The funds are channelled through state school food offices, or in special cases through a regional USDA office. Schools receive up to 12 cents for each regularly priced breakfast served, 34.75 cents for each reduced-price breakfast and 42.25 cents for each free breakfast. USDA sets an income guideline for eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. The parents of students must meet the income requirements and apply to the

BREAKFAST FOOD REQUIREMENTS

A school that decides to establish a breakfast program must serve a USDA-approved meal to receive federal assistance. The Type A breakfast, as it is called, consists of one-half pint of milk; one slice of whole-grain or enriched bread, or its equivalent in cereal, rolls or muffins; one-half cup of fruit or vegetables or juice; and, as often as practicable, additional protein-rich foods such as eggs, cheese, meat or peanut butter.

Breakfast does not have to be elaborate, and it can be more varied than bacon and eggs, cereal and milk. Foods that can be easily served without full kitchen facilities are also foods that add interest to breakfast: yogurt, peanut butter, hard cheese, cream cheese, cottage cheese, cornbread, bagels, quick breads, dried fruits and whole fruits such as apples, oranges, nectarines, grapes or bananas.

Breakfast Menus for Schools With Cooking Facilities

Fresh fruit
Pancakes
Milk

Baked apple
Corn muffins
Milk

Tomato juice
Grilled cheese sandwiches
Milk

Breakfast Menus for Schools Without Cooking Facilities

Orange wedges
Brown bread with cheese
Milk

Banana
Granola
Milk

Fresh peach
Whole wheat bread
Peanut butter
Milk

local school for their children to receive the benefits.

Extra funding for "especially needy" schools is available in each state based upon standards determined by each state school food director. The extra reimbursement allows up to 47.25 cents for each reduced-price breakfast served and up to 52.25 cents for free breakfasts. While each state determines which schools are eligible for this extra funding, they must do so within general guidelines. For example, a school must have a high percentage of needy children in attendance, a high or unusual cost of providing breakfast despite good management or other unusual factors that show special financial need. Some schools are also eligible for up to 100 percent federal financing for equipment and most schools are eligible for up to 75 percent reimbursement for equipment.

And yet, despite the need, despite congressional intent, despite its self-supporting nature, the School Breakfast Program has been established in only 20 percent of the nation's public schools. The program has grown by only ten percent each year for the last three years. In contrast, school lunch is a virtual institution in most school districts, available in 92 percent of our schools. While it's been 12 years since Congress set up the program, only 20,000 schools have breakfast, a sad performance considering that ten years after passage of the National School Lunch Act, 56,000 schools had lunch programs. The disparity between the lunch and breakfast programs is too great. We had to ask why.

3

THE OBSTACLE COURSE

If we can serve 11 million lunches, why should 50,000 breakfasts be all that big a deal?

School Business Manager
Wisconsin

Every school that wants to start a breakfast program is bound to encounter some obstacles making it difficult. Some of these are natural, a consequence of starting anything new. Some are not. They stem from inadequacies in the legislation, from the failure of USDA to provide sufficient support or information and from recalcitrant officials in the states and communities. Often, however, these obstacles are surmountable with just a little extra effort. In the following pages we list the seven major obstacles to the breakfast program found during our interviews. Where possible, we note what communities have done to overcome the barriers to feeding our children.

1. Finances

When you don't want to do something, you can rig up all kinds of costs.

State School Food Director
Massachusetts

When we began this study, we believed that finances would play a significant role in obstructing school breakfast programs. We had seen many programs waylaid by business managers, waving budgets and saying that new expenditures were impossible. But we also found that many officials, particularly those in New England and the Midwest, where we heard the most complaints about money and school breakfast programs, simply had not spent enough time investigating what costs actually were involved.

At first glance, school breakfast programs can appear to cost a great deal. "We'd have to buy 30 new buses to get all the kids here at one time," said one midwestern school superintendent. Others worried about heat and light or start-up costs for equipment. A Montana administrator told us, "We did a cost analysis at the junior high and found that to do breakfast, we'd need a complete crew of ten gals and we'd have to hire another engineer [janitor] at $12,000 a year."

Where these financial fears are real, they are caused largely by misinformation. The general financial squeeze in which school districts find themselves and the common tendency to assume that school breakfast, like lunch, requires a state or local contribution lead administrators to believe that breakfast is going to cost them money they do not have. This is not true. "We've had no problems with breakfast at all, it's so close to one hundred percent funding," said a Maine school business manger. Unfortunately, USDA and most state school food services offices have not provided local school districts with

adequate, accurate information; consequently, many administrators are unaware of what school breakfast is, what reimbursements are allowable, how easy the program is to set up.

We found repeatedly, as well, that school officials who want to make the program work, can—if they do some homework. Administrators we visited in most districts that had breakfast echoed this Ohio business manager who solved his problems:

> **We had some scheduling and transportation problems to work out, but breakfast is a good program, and we've made it financially.**

Many schools that may run into financial difficulty would not if the "especially needy" provision of the school feeding programs were fully utilized. Congress intended to guarantee the program by including this provision, but it is misconstrued and ignored in virtually every region of the country. The job of determining each state's requirements for especially needy eligibility has been given to state school food directors; many have failed to set standards and others have set standards too stringent for any school to qualify. We found that one reason state directors are reluctant to confer eligibility on a school district is their mistaken notion that paying one school at especially needy rates of reimbursement necessitates paying another school at a lower rate than the regular reimbursements. One state director told us: "We have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and we don't want to do that, so we don't have any schools classified as especially needy."

An equally important factor in the underutilization of the especially needy monies is that local administrators shy away from being classified as "needy." They do not want to be considered "poor" or "below standard"; consequently, they do not press state directors for more assistance.

Another source of financial confusion revolves around indirect costs:

> **The government will pay no indirect costs for school breakfast, and these costs are immense**

because you're only dealing with a few kids. School food is the only thing in the school system that has to pay its own way, and the breakfast program is going to put us out of business because the government doesn't pay indirect costs.

The Wisconsin director who said this is wrong, but his view is popularly held. Most often indirect costs such as building maintenance, supervision and upkeep can be absorbed into operating costs, as has happened in many schools that already make provisions for students who arrive early. Many schools keep operating expenses down by cordoning off areas that aren't needed until class time. A cafeteria manager in Montana said her school solved its financial problem "just by working faster and cutting out some of the lunch activities."

Although school breakfast programs should break even, breaking even shouldn't be a prerequisite. Schools are not in the business of making a profit, and, while finances play a major role in the availability of educational programs, nutrition and health especially should not be put in the position of having to pay for themselves. Nor did legislation intend that they do, yet many administrators share the opinion of a Massachusetts state legislator who said:

I don't know of any factors that have facilitated [school breakfast] except schools making money from it.

An Arizona administrator told us:

I had rather lavish ideas about school food when I first came in, but the board had made up its mind that income should equal outgo.

In a school district that is "88 percent native-born, white race, 12 percent black and 1/100 percent others," an administrator told us:

This is a business operation, just like every other business, and our business is education... We

don't think it's our business to feed [the students]... I guess, frankly, we broke the law [by not providing breakfast under a state mandate], but it was under appeal.

Thankfully, some people look at finances differently, as does this Montana principal:

Expenses are a big hang-up, but the goal should be service, not making money. If a program breaks even, that's peachy keen, but it's not a goal.

Another Montana principal has been fighting for a breakfast program, but he has been defeated repeatedly by a school board talking finances:

The standard answer I get is that we have to straighten out the hot lunch program first, then we'll give breakfast a thought. Well, to me that's a cop-out, because they're never going to straighten out the hot lunch program any better than it's doing right now... To me that's no excuse not to go into a hot breakfast.

2. Time and Bus Schedules

We'd have to start school at 7:00 a.m. if we got a breakfast program.

Principal
Montana

Many school administrators believe that there is not enough time in the day to accommodate a breakfast program. "We can't take time out of the school day," said one interviewee, reflecting a widely held, but erroneous view that breakfast is not a part of the learning day. For children who have not eaten, the school day properly begins with breakfast, for the simple fact is, a hungry child cannot concentrate. Moreover, breakfast provides education as well as fuel. The time devoted to it should be considered educational, for as a nation we need more knowledge of nutrition. Congress, in recognition of that need, has set aside one million dollars for nutrition education for 1978-79. Breakfast is a perfect opportunity to provide nutrition education. It's a "built-in laboratory," is what an Oregon principal told us.

We found a school food director who sends nutrition puzzles home on the backs of weekly school food menus. She also works through the P.T.A. to educate parents and has special campaigns—one to stress muscle-building nutrients during football season, another to introduce new foods through tasting parties in the school kitchen. She especially emphasizes breakfast. "This is one of the most important times of the day," she said. "I always try to have a little something extra for the children at breakfast—an activity, a new food, something to call attention to the importance of breakfast."

Bus schedules are also frequently seen as insur-

mountable barriers. Some school officials claim that it takes 45 minutes to an hour to serve breakfast, in which case re-scheduling of buses would become overwhelming. For example, one Nebraska administrator told us, "Breakfast? It would be a total farce." His district has 35 buses, and most arrive by 8:15 a.m. The first bell is at 8:30, and the school board feels that 15 minutes is not enough time for breakfast.

There are solutions. Many schools do have very tight bus schedules. For example, we found a school in Maine with 80 different bus routes covering 2,500 miles a day and carrying 90 percent of the students. But most schools find that they can shift bus schedules by ten or 15 minutes to adjust for breakfast. In fact, it only takes students that long to finish the meal. "Ever watch a teenager eat?" an Arizona cafeteria manager asked.

If setting bus schedules up does not work, there are other solutions. In Montana, a high school principal avoided all scheduling problems by starting breakfast at 7:45 a.m., and running it until 10 a.m., allowing students who arrived just before the first bell to eat later during study hall or breaks between classes. One superintendent, when faced with objections that the buses would have to be sent out ten minutes early or they would have to start school ten minutes late, told us:

> **Most announcements are read during the first ten minutes of school anyway, so we'll bring breakfast into the classroom during that time.**

Breakfast is not the only event that has forced a shift in bus routes and schedules. For example, the Maine district with 80 bus routes runs an "activity bus" for children who participate in an extensive extracurricular program after school each day. The change to one-way streets, construction of new schools when overcrowding occurs, the restructuring of districts to create middle schools, double shifts and consolidation—all have forced changes in bus routes to which districts have somehow accommodated themselves.

3. Supervision

If you take a teacher at her salary and bring her in early, it's going to run into a lot of money.

Superintendent
Massachusetts

Supervision is frequently cited by school boards and administrators as one of the biggest obstacles to school breakfast. They fear high costs and discipline problems with students. We were told supervision is also a reason teachers often oppose school breakfast. Teachers and administrators alike fear that breakfast automatically means extra monitoring and paperwork. In one Massachusetts district, the bargaining agreement setting teachers' hours allows only 15 minutes between their arrival at school and the beginning of classes. The superintendent there said, "You just cannot set up and have a breakfast program in that time. It relates to money, but it poses other logistical problems as well."

Supervision has not turned out to be a high hurdle for many schools with successful breakfast programs, however. Many schools find that they need much less supervision than they had imagined. The children are quieter, better behaved in the early morning than they are later in the day, and when feeding time in the cafeteria is spread out, supervision decreases dramatically since fewer children are eating at any given time.

A South Carolina principal who once had a breakfast program in his school and dropped it because of "supervision problems," re-instituted the program after that state's law was passed requiring that breakfast be made available in all public schools. He told us:

The first time I got rid of the program; this time I got rid of the problems. There's no way I would drop it again. We have too many children who benefit from it.

A common misunderstanding is that the cost of supervision is not covered by federal reimbursements. The only two situations when supervision costs are not covered are in those schools where the total cost of the program exceeds the amount of available reimbursement and in some schools in states that use a formula set by HEW to control the amount of overhead for all federal grants to schools. In the first case, supervision costs could be covered if the schools got especially needy reimbursements. In the second case, the affected schools should seek a renegotiation of the HEW formula at the state level. Also, it should be noted that this formula only affects reimbursement for indirect costs. Under a recent USDA interpretation of the regulations, the cost for supervisory personnel who do not have other non-program duties is considered a direct cost of providing school breakfast and is, therefore, automatically reimbursable. If administrators experience problems in getting their supervision costs reimbursed, they should consider hiring someone specifically to supervise instead of having teacher's aides or other school employees do it.

If teachers are paid for their time they are, naturally, more willing to supervise, and teachers make good supervisors. Where they are not available, however, administrative personnel can be assigned on alternate schedules, parents can be hired or community service job placements such as CETA, Green Thumb or Senior Citizens can provide supervision at little or no cost to the schools. For instance, a bilingual school in Connecticut offers low-income people—mainly mothers—part-time jobs supervising breakfast and lunch. The principal told us:

Economically, the program offers community people an opportunity to have part-time jobs, which they need. It's that little bit that might mean a little extra for the kids, a little pin money for the

mother. And it gives them a sense of pride. Before, they thought, "No one would give me a job." And yet they have found jobs, found they had job experience, that they enjoyed working. This encourages people to be independent. Too often women who have never had a job say, "Well, what can I do? There's nothing I know how to do. You know, I can't even read or write." But they can clean up a cafeteria, they can serve and the children turn to them . . . We try to hire mothers. When one leaves, we try to get another mother. So [we have] a nice home feeling here.

Volunteers can also be used, and they can be reached through a wide variety of sources: sororities, sunshine groups, churches. People have complained that volunteers are sometimes unreliable, but it is our experience that when they are substantially involved in the program, by helping with menu planning, for example, they are more dependable and maintain high interest.

4. Facilities

If we were going to do breakfast, then we'd have to have a whole new kitchen, plus the staff to run it.

Principal
Arizona

It is a commonly held belief that if a school does not have a kitchen or a cafeteria, it cannot serve meals. Said an Oregon superintendent whose district has no food programs: "One has to come before the other."

Surprising as it may seem, he is wrong. Most schools have refrigeration, all they really need to support a

breakfast program. For many schools, the satellite system of preparing food at a centrally located kitchen and then delivering it has proved a workable solution. Arrangements can also be made with local food distributors, such as dairies, to deliver daily. For example, a Boston program got a substantial push when a local milk company came up with a unitized breakfast. "These schools had no storage, so we had to have daily delivery," the local school food director said.

> **They [the milk company] package the breakfasts: juice, cereal and the pure pack—a polyethylene bag with a spoon, napkin and straw. The milk is separate. This breakfast is so simple, so foolproof, you can use it under any circumstances.**

Schools with no cafeterias can serve meals in the classroom. This solution has invited the criticism that eating in the classroom is "a health hazard." Said a Connecticut school board member, "It's unsanitary, unhealthy and detrimental and should be outlawed by local or state health agencies." We haven't found these warnings to be true. In fact, eating in the classroom has positive benefits. There are fewer students to supervise, and less mess to clean up. Children are given a chance to learn how to pick up after themselves. Bringing in a speaker from the local health department to tell children why it is important to keep the homeroom clean can be a part of their expanded nutrition education.

Some administrators complain they could not put in a breakfast program because they start preparing lunch at 7 a.m.—one even said 5 a.m. But from others we learned that breakfast takes very little added work, and requires nothing more than minor adjustments in the kitchen time schedule. Additionally, breakfast requires less elaborate preparation than many people expect and schools can make their whole operation more efficient by using the same staff and equipment to produce lunch and breakfast.

5. All or None

As a result of our experience, once you start in one or two schools, somebody will come along and take you to court, and the end result will be you'll have to put it in all schools.

School Board Member
Connecticut

The administration in Waterboro, Maine, wanted to put a breakfast program in grades six through 12, but the superintendent felt it should be done in all local schools, first through 12th grade, or not at all. A local school food director in Oregon told us, "If we were to file for breakfast, we'd have to make it available to every school." In these and other districts, school breakfast is stymied by the notion that it is better not to have it at all if all can't have it.

Fear of equal protection lawsuits keeps some districts from creating breakfast programs even for schools where the need is readily apparent, as in Hartford, Connecticut, where nearly 75 percent of the student body is eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Federal law now recommends the breakfast program for all schools where it is needed to ensure the nutritional well-being of those students in attendance, so, by failing to provide breakfast in even the neediest schools, a district may be violating the law and therefore inviting a lawsuit, as well.

Where administrators are hesitant to put the breakfast program in all schools, it can be started in a few "needy" schools. Parent and student involvement in the planning can make a pilot program a great success and a strong model for other schools. Expansion can come later, after the district has gained experience in making the program work.

6. Initiative

Somebody in a leadership capacity has to push the breakfast program. Otherwise, it's too much trouble for everybody . . . for the administrators, the principals, the board. Unless you have somebody to fight for it, you don't have a breakfast program—you have opposition.

School Food Director
Ohio

Before breakfast can be put into a school, someone at the local level must take the initiative and ask for the program. The decision rests with the local school board, but the initiative to start school breakfast rarely begins there. The suggestion almost always comes from the community or the administration. Making a formal presentation to the school board puts the request squarely in front of that body. In many cases, such an action appears to be what administrators and boards need to start the machinery moving. The request becomes their rationale.

While the school board members we interviewed usually look to the administration for guidance, it is clear from our study that many administrators will not push meal programs unless there is a public demand or direction from the state school officer. One superintendent in Oregon said he would never openly pursue even a lunch program because "there's not that much vocal demand for it. The chances of school breakfast are like a snowball in hell." An Ohio school business manager said he cannot find any discernible desire for the program and characterized breakfast as a "non-issue. If half the parents wanted it, there's no question that they'd get it."[1]

We learned of a number of instances where the public or individuals were far ahead of their leaders. In one town it was a "lone female school board member's impassioned plea" that led to a school breakfast program. In Phoenix, nine years ago, a clergyman got a program going in a low-income area after he held community hearings, surveyed students' needs and presented his findings to the school board. In Boston, where no specific person or group came forward, the initiative came from the state mandate and the school food service department. "We knew it would work," the local school food director said. "As soon as we tried breakfast in a few schools, we started it in 50 others in a month."

Superintendents do not wait for community requests before they suggest new schools or make curricular changes. They feel that it is their job to provide leadership in these areas. Why then do educators and administrators refuse to take a leadership role when it comes to school food, so that initiative must come from below instead of from local officials, state school food offices and USDA?

7. Participation

Getting by is not satisfactory. It takes dedication, uncommon pride in what you can accomplish. You have to be concerned... You have to put love in the soup.

State School Food Director
Oregon

Once school district administrators have solved scheduling and supervision problems and start serving breakfast, they look at participation as a measure of success. And if for an entire year only 20 percent of the

student body shows up, the program may very well be discontinued. One administrator in South Carolina, who canceled the breakfast program because of low participation, explained, "Yeah, I gave them a choice—take it or leave it."

While it may be discouraging that many students choose to leave it, programs should not be discontinued upon that basis alone. Indeed, administrators should ask themselves first whether they are managing the programs properly: Do the children feel stigmatized as "welfare waifs" in the breakfast lines? Is the cafeteria environment attractive and comfortable? Is breakfast well promoted? Just displaying a positive attitude about breakfast can make a big difference in attendance, as a number of interviewees told us:

> **I'd be reticent about encouraging breakfast in a school where the administrator won't keynote it. But as soon as they want one, it solves all your problems. They will create the situation to make it possible.**
>
> State School Food Director
> Oregon

> **Where there is a strong administrative understanding about children's needs and a responsiveness to those needs, that's where you are likely to find a good breakfast program.**
>
> State School Food Director
> Arizona

Beyond this, administrators must administer the programs properly. We found, for example, that schools enjoy high participation when administrators hire experienced, skilled cafeteria personnel. Too often, business managers or head cooks are given major responsibility for food service but no training or support. The breakfast program is bound to suffer as a result.

So, too, do programs falter for other reasons. A South Carolina food services director attributes low participation in local high schools not only to open campuses but also to the cafeteria environments, where the food is simply

put on a plate and handed to the student: "The dining room looks like a mess hall—just a large room with blank walls . . . noisy, crowded, hot." In this district, however, grade school participation is impressive anyway because the "little kids look on the cafeteria manager as their friend and the atmosphere is much more pleasant." Moreover, when schools put in juke boxes, replace barracks-style tables and benches with smaller tables and chairs, close down junk food outlets and machines and involve the students in everything from menu planning to serving, participation soars.

Even when the administration does its best to make a school breakfast program work, it may find participation low because it is setting its goal too high. A pilot program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, served an elaborate hot breakfast but considered it a failure because only one-fifth of the needy students participated. The program was canceled. In another midwestern town, we were told that breakfast wasn't needed because "only 200 kids showed up." This local school food director was disappointed that the other 700 children who eat school lunch didn't eat breakfast as well.

Many administrators and food service personnel have unrealistic expectations about participation in breakfast programs, based upon their experiences with school lunch. If their expectations are not met, they feel the program is no good or is not needed. The usual response is to drop it, instead of finding ways to improve it. Comparing statistics between lunch and breakfast participation is a mistake. To predicate the survival of a breakfast program upon its participation equaling that of lunch is to defeat the program before it is fully tried or working. Disappointment is natural, but it should not prompt a school to cancel breakfast. Like any new program, breakfast may not take hold immediately. Meanwhile, schools have a responsibility to offer breakfast to those who want it and to try to find ways of attracting other students who could benefit from the nourishment.

Many children are too proud to participate in a school's breakfast program. They may be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals but are embarrassed that other students and teachers know they are "needy." Many

students believe breakfast is only for "poor kids" and so avoid the cafeteria before lunch, not knowing breakfast is just as much for paying students. "Probably half the kids from Montana's farm families are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but most won't apply," that state's school food director told us. The local director in Phoenix estimates that 4,700 children were eligible for free or reduced-price meals in 1976 but did not apply for them; their current participation is four percent.

Pride is a special factor in schools where students who receive free or reduced-price meals are easily identified. Separate lines for Type A meals and *a la carte*, fast food (where it's "cash only" in the latter line), ID cards, armbands, posted lists of students signed up for free or reduced-price meals—a host of illegal collection procedures—result in immediate and sustained identification of those who are paying and those who are not. When that happens, participation by needy students is discouraged, and the program is often defeated by administrators who assume the lack of participation indicates "there is no need."

Discriminatory collection procedures are illegal, but USDA and many state school food offices have not gone far enough in ensuring that students eligible for free breakfasts are guaranteed anonymity. Without doubt, administrators who follow both the spirit and the letter of the law attract more children to the food lines.

There are a number of ways to avoid identifying students as "needy." In Massachusetts, the state school food director modified the notices sent home to parents to spell out that "every meal is subsidized so that people shouldn't hesitate to apply for free or reduced-price meals" if they are qualified. Likewise, payments can be made in the hall or at the school office, with tickets being distributed later in the homeroom or just before mealtime. In South Carolina, many schools use a meal ticket that can be read only by a computer. This system also provides an automatic count of the number and types of meals purchased each day. Other schools bill the parents, and the students merely sign in before each meal. Only the school business office knows who pays and how much. We found several schools that have made

concerted efforts to publicize the breakfast program as a benefit for all students, not just "poor kids." Participation is not a problem in such schools.

These obstacles—finances, scheduling, supervision, facilities, fear of lawsuits, lack of initiative and participation—are not all that hinder progress toward establishing more school breakfast programs. For even when some school board members and administrators are given solutions to these problems, they find others. And, as we came to realize during our investigation, when someone says, "Yes, but we can't because . . . " he or she was often saying, "Yes, but I just don't want to."

4

PREJUDICES AGAINST SCHOOL BREAKFAST

There are no problems we can't overcome if [school administrators] want the breakfast program. Logistical excuses are a subterfuge for not wanting the program.

State School Food Director
Wisconsin

For many people, school breakfast raises the question of the legitimacy or the "rightness" of the program itself. Because of attitudes, convictions, prejudices—whatever one chooses to call them—there are "reasons" that prevent people from making changes, or even from wanting to make changes to establish school breakfast programs. And wanting to make changes is as important as having the resources to carry them out. In fact, we discovered that "wanting to" was the biggest problem of all behind lagging breakfast statistics. As a western state food director told us:

When you think you have overcome [administrative] objections to food programs... you will find they may not be the true ones. When people say "finances" are the difficulty, they may mean something else. Of course, the stated objections have some basis in fact—there are necessary adjustments to implement breakfast. It's at this point that you get down to the real objections... And those may be that the administration is reluctant to take on extra work, or to say something that has emotional impact like, "I feel mother and father should do it."

Why do people oppose breakfast programs "in principle?" In the course of conducting our interviews, we turned up five basic reasons. In some cases these were advanced outright as arguments, but as a rule they were more subliminal, expressed between the lines. Whether held as carefully thought out arguments or held as lifelong attitudes, however, these principles must be rethought if school breakfast is to succeed.

1. The Good Old Days

When I went to school, I carried a biscuit in a tin bucket.

Superintendent
South Carolina

Back in the good old days, some Americans tell us, "it" was better. Children got up early, then slogged miles through rain and snow to reach school. They were diligent in their studies and had plenty of chores to keep them busy. Papa worked hard at his job, and Mama worked hard at home. They all ate good, homecooked

food, even if they didn't always have enough, and everyone took care of his own.

Every society must have its recollections. But as it affects school breakfast programs, this vision of the past—only partly accurate, and then for a minority of our citizens—is as dangerous as it is widely held. Quite simply, it sets an unrealistic standard, one that gets in the way of progress and doesn't suit the current situation.

Worse, it somehow detracts from the problems that our young people face today. Although the view suggests that our children are pampered, the truth is that many have it harder than their elders did when they went to school. Consider, for example, the rigors of traveling long distances in buses to schools across town. Consider that cities provide less space to play, that facilities are usually overcrowded. Consider that getting good wholesome meals has become increasingly difficult with the demands on mothers to work and the pressures of advertisements promoting junk foods. As one of our interviewees put it, "kids live in a hotdog and hamburger world."

Today's schools must have programs that fit today's problems and capitalize on today's opportunities to help children. To do otherwise is to deprive them of the chance to look back on the "golden days" of their youth.

2. Home vs. School

I don't care how pro-breakfast you are, it's hard to be anti-home.

State School Food Director
Ohio

"We hear an awful lot about school meals destroying the family," a northeastern state director told us. Many people see breakfast as a responsibility of the home—and primarily of the mother. "A mother's love is in her child's

47

lunch bag," said a school board member in Connecticut. A parent in Milwaukee summed up the hard-line, mother-in-the-home argument: "Even if the kids have nothing but crackers and milk at home, it's better to have mother's love and crackers there than a balanced meal at school."

Breakfast takes the blame for eroding the already crumbling family unit and short circuiting education in home-taught social amenities:

> **Meals are the last responsibility parents have to children. The next thing is to put cots in the school.**
>
> Business Manager
> Connecticut

> **Are the school meals going to teach children which hand to eat with and where the fork goes, niceties which families traditionally have taught?**
>
> State Legislator
> Massachusetts

These opinions to the contrary, school breakfast does not present a choice between eating a family breakfast and eating at school: it is a choice between breakfast and no breakfast. Many who do not see the "need" for school breakfast have not faced up to the changes in American life. They see mothers at home, families cheerfully conversing over hot breakfast, fathers in the job market, children walking to school. The movement of women into the labor force, rising divorce rates, high unemployment and extensive busing have not sunk into their consciousness. Society is rapidly changing, and school breakfast is a response to these changes, not a cause.

Look, for example, at the question of the changing role of women in our society. Nearly one-half the women with school-aged children were in the labor force in 1975; 71 million school children had working mothers.[1] The number of children living only with their mothers increased 80 percent between 1960 and 1973, when more than nine million children were living in one-parent, female-headed households.[2] Sixty percent of those

children in female-headed households were living below the poverty level and were eligible for free breakfast or lunch.[3]

While some acknowledge that more women are working outside the home, not only out of desire but from economic necessity, many do not connect these facts with the need for school breakfast. We found some that did, however. "It's not a question of keeping the family together. It's a question of feeding kids," one administrator said. Said another, showing how much things really have changed, "It's the concerned mothers who want a breakfast program."

3. The School's Proper Role

The primary job of the school is to educate, not to provide custodial care or welfare services.

Principal
Connecticut

A major bias against school breakfast is that the administration of such a program is not a proper role for a school. Many oppose school food programs because the school "ought to be educating the children, not feeding them." In Springfield, Ohio, for instance, we were told that the community wanted the schools to expend their energies on education and leave breakfast to the parents. School lunch may be a "necessary evil," as one person described it, but "breakfast is the last straw."

Why is an institution that's only supposed to educate kids also expected to do so many other things, including babysitting?

Superintendent
Nebraska

I'm going to put up a sign: WE PERFORM MIRACLES. We're trying to be all things to all people.

Principal
South Carolina

If we have to have a breakfast program, we might as well turn the schools into dormitories.

Superintendent
Wisconsin

No doubt about it, schools are being asked to do many things—physical education, busing, sex education, vaccinations, drug counseling, to name only a few. Whether out of frustration, resentment or just plain old principle, many administrators feel awash in demands for more and more services:

I resent the fact that I have to run a restaurant because in all the training I've ever had, I never learned anything about running a restaurant... I don't want to run a restaurant.

Principal
South Carolina

But hungry children cannot learn or reach their full capacities. And ensuring that children attain their full potential is one of the school's jobs. For this reason, some administrators see breakfast as a blessing and not a burden. "It's one of the greatest opportunities we have to build better children," proclaimed an Oregon school food director. "It is a responsibility. It's a service to the community," said a Montana superintendent. An eastern superintendent gave us his perception of school food programs and the role of the school. In his district, 5,000 to 6,000 meals are served each day:

Why do we serve that many a day? Is that the school's business? Is this a case of the tail wagging the dog? Does food service wag the whole program? Do we determine when we run our schools, how long the classes will be so that we can fit them around the three shifts that go into the lunchroom? You can look at it that way, but that's looking through the wrong end of the telescope, because that view maximizes our problems—problems that can be managed... that have to be managed.

Asked whether feeding is a responsibility of the schools, a South Carolina principal replied:

It is whenever the school goes through the normal eating time... Yes, ma'am, it's the responsibility... You pick up kids at 7:00. We have some students dropped off here at 6:30 by working parents. By 7:00 we have 15 of them. We start serving breakfast by 7:15, and the first bus comes at 7:20. Why shouldn't we feed them when we haul them such a long distance?

And, an Ohio superintendent said:

We could find excuses to get out of a lot of things. I'm not sure it's the school's responsibility to provide entertainment for the community every Friday evening in the form of a football game, but we do it.

In Beaverton, Oregon, which has one of the nation's best school lunch programs, the school board sees an educational purpose to food services and has passed the following resolution:

The Beaverton School District accepts the principle that proper preparation and serving of food is a part of the general education of students and contributes to alertness, responsiveness and the ability to learn. The daily experience in

partaking of food is an extension of the classroom environment wherein the child learns the attributes of sharing, social graces, self-discipline, and nutritional awareness.

Nutritional awareness is a responsibility of the schools, and the increasing awareness of the need for nutrition education in this country was apparent in our interviews. A South Carolina administrator said:

The biggest job is to educate the youngsters as to the proper nutrition... Food service has a supportive role, because experience is the best teacher, and besides, we have a built-in laboratory, a nutrition learning center.

A Wisconsin advocate summed it up this way:

If we don't learn how to eat, we don't learn how to live... Part of the learning program in the schools should be how to eat to keep the body healthy. If you haven't got a healthy child, you haven't got a healthy school, a healthy society or anything else.

4. Needy Who?

The USDA did the breakfast program a great disservice when they described it as being for "needy" kids.

State Administrator
Wisconsin

When it came to the concept of "need," we found in our study that the term was often misunderstood and therefore too narrowly defined. School boards, opposed to breakfast to start with, often believed that "needy" meant only the most obviously disadvantaged children. Others are left to define need with inadequate yardsticks. A business manager in an Ohio school district, relying on local income averages, remarked, "Basically, this type of community does not need a breakfast program strictly from an economic basis because the people are upper middle class." A food service director in Milwaukee declared that since children did not always eat their food in the morning, they were not hungry and did not "need" breakfast.

Need is hard to see. As one state director said, "Now granted, there are pockets of people who don't have enough to eat, but they're not visible." As a result, hungry children aren't even a topic for discussion in many places. An official in a district in Ohio said, "We do get one or two requests a year [from a teacher or nurse] for a soda cracker to go along with the free milk because a child is weak." This statement came from a district that has a non-federally funded breakfast program that was started ten years ago by the student council. Most participating students are described as being from families on the lower economic rungs, and yet because the school will not apply for federal funds, all students

must pay for breakfast. A superintendent in a different state sought to explain the attitude of his own school board:

> **All I can do is judge what they say and why they perhaps underestimate the incredible nutritional needs of some of the families in the community. I say that because quite often they talk about why do all the benefits go to the Title I students? It's a quantum leap—a quantum difference between a middle-class family background and a poverty background. It is such a huge chasm, that simply to talk about it casually, as a "little" difference, is just wrong. There is no comparison between the kinds of problems we're discussing. Whether we are talking about the nutrition of the children or the family background, it's a major problem of comprehending, and the people who understand it and live it aren't likely to be elected to school boards.**

In any case, need is not just a question of poverty, as Congress rcognized more than two years ago. In expanding food service programs for children in 1975, federal legislators said nothing about needy or poor children:

> **As a national nutrition and health policy, it is the purpose and intent of the Congress that the School Breakfast Program be made available in all schools where it is needed to provide adequate nutrition for children in attendance.[4]**

In many cities and towns we found that the families of breakfast participants came from a spectrum of backgrounds—itinerant poor to elite rich, unemployed to professional, welfare to middle class. In Butte, Montana, a school official pointed out that those not needy today could be so tomorrow. He used the example of what happens when a large mining company lays off personnel: as the unemployment rate shoots up, the number of free and reduced-price meals rises with it;

when unemployment decreases, those requests decline. Because we were told similar stories in other states, it is apparent that school food programs help ensure that children are not dragged down by fluctuating economic currents. Administrators who appear to be sold on the overall benefits of school breakfast see that school food programs have a large constituency. "Needy" really means anyone who has not had breakfast that morning. Nutritional deprivation does not always mean a child had no breakfast, either. Children from affluent families who get a pop tart for breakfast, or grab a soft drink before the first bell rings can be just as nutritionally deprived as economically "needy" children.

When I was a working mother and had my youngster in school, it was important to me to know he'd have a balanced diet. Left to his own devices, he might not have chosen [food] carefully.

School Food Director
Oregon

The chief benefit of the School Breakfast Program is the nutritional value—especially to those children who come from deprived families—but, as an assistant superintendent in South Carolina said, "Just because they're not poor doesn't mean they get a balanced meal."

I think there's a lot of research that will support the notion that there's a greater likelihood of nutritional deficiency among the affluent because of their accessibility to junk foods in their lifestyle.

State School Food Director
South Carolina

5. The Undeserving Parent

It's better to eat your root hog or die than to go on welfare.

Community Advocate
Maine

Perhaps the most emotional negative response to school breakfast is that it amounts to a handout, just another "something to benefit parents too lazy to work or take care of their children." A legislator from Massachusetts explained it this way:

The opposition stems primarily from people who work every day, and are now beginning to see themselves as being required to support people who don't work. To this group, school meals are an additional support out of their hard-earned tax dollars. They resent it. What we are seeing is a groundswell of opposition from families who work hard to provide the free breakfasts, free lunches and free food stamps.

This attitude is not unlike the colorful admonition we heard in Maine, "Eat your root hog or die," an old American conviction that when a colonial stalwart reaches the ragged edge of desperation, he would rather eat his root hog, or die, before taking a "handout." That would be going to an extreme, for a root hog was a farmer's best worker. Enticed by corn cobs, root hogs loosened the earth around tree stumps to help the farmer pull them out of the ground.

Some people justify their disapproval of school food programs by adopting myths held about welfare recipients. A Connecticut community worker reported an

example that school lunch—never mind breakfast—would encourage poor people to move into a district. Many members of this group regard school food as "free food for the minorities" or "government giveaways." An assistant superintendent in Arizona told us opposition to school food in his district comes from those parents in the community who "oppose needy programs of all kinds." This particular district almost went off federal food service entirely. The school board objected to the increase in eligibility guidelines because it meant more children would be getting "handouts."

Some educators explained, as did a South Carolina principal, that support for school breakfast programs comes from "lazy parents who won't get their butts up and see that the kids are properly attired and fed," or, as a Nebraska administrator said, from "mothers who don't want to cook." These administrators told us they feel that parents are simply pushing off on the schools what they themselves will not do, or that parents are no longer feeling responsible for raising and nurturing their own children.

The truth is that families on welfare or food stamps often don't have the resources to feed their children properly, no matter how much they want to. In any case, it is not the "undeserving parent" who is punished by withholding nutritional benefits to children; it is the children and their futures that are taxed. Said an Oregon administrator:

> **In many instances, parents don't carry out their responsibilities as well as they might, [but you] don't like to see the children penalized as a result. Any other way to take care of it is better than leaving the children on the short end of the deal.**

A school food director in South Carolina put it this way: "I'm not cold-hearted enough to say that you should take your social philosophy out on a kid."

5

TARGET PROFILES

To provide some comparison of School Breakfast Program problems, prejudices and possibilities in the ten states and 25 cities we visited, our investigator summarized her findings and impressions of each. The profiles follow.

ARIZONA

With 86 percent of its public schools in the National School Lunch Program, Arizona is several percentage points below the national average in school lunch participation. The state is well above the national average for breakfast participation, however, with 29 percent of its public schools in the program.

The effectiveness of school food programs in Arizona, as everywhere else, is dependent upon the administration's attitudes. While schools without lunch programs often cite lack of facilities as their excuse, the state school food director reports that the problems are usually resolved when a new administrator comes in. Philosophical opposition and reluctance to make adjustments in bus or class schedules are the chief impediments.

The state school food office has undertaken an aggressive promotional effort. Arizona is the only state we visited that has a person assigned fulltime to breakfast outreach. It is also one of the few states where local people mentioned that the state office had approached them about breakfast.

State administrators are especially interested in reaching superintendents and business managers. They have difficulty getting the attention of some officials for several reasons, including the resentment local people have of "outsiders," even if the "outsiders" are from inside the state. A large number of administrators see no relation, beyond convenience, between school food programs and education and are, consequently, unwilling to devote any time to thinking or reading about it or to discussing anything but the budget.

● Casa Grande

None of Casa Grande's six elementary schools offer breakfast, but all serve lunch. School lunch has not been an issue in the Casa Grande elementary district, but there have been administrative problems. Before the present superintendent took over, facilities were limited and the district had to bus students to central feeding sites. To correct the situation, the superintendent incorporated a central cafeteria into plans for a new school and built multi-purpose rooms that could be used for serving lunch at the older schools. While the program is complicated by transporting food and serving carts, district administrators told us the cost is minimal.

School breakfast has not been an issue either, but only the state school food office has made any initiative in Casa Grande. The business manager philosophically opposes the program; the superintendent shares his reservations. Controversy would result from any aggressive, non-administrative initiative for breakfast. Although district administrators are aware that there are many needy children in the district, they do not see a need for school breakfast. Implementation is also hampered by anti-federal feelings in the administration and the community.

● Phoenix

All 12 of Phoenix Union High School District's schools have served lunch for 18 years. There have been complaints about the food, but by far the biggest controversy has been over eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. At one point the school board almost shut down the program rather than abide by national eligibility guidelines they felt were too liberal, but community reaction thwarted the planned withdrawal.

Only two schools in Phoenix have breakfast programs. A clergyman instigated breakfast nine years ago in a low-income area by organizing the community and winning school board approval. The programs have gone through several changes over the years, and one has been dropped. A new program is scheduled to open, but citywide expansion is hindered both by a lack of initiative and by a busing problem. Many students ride city buses to school, so the schedule is not controlled by the district, and most principals are unwilling to adjust class schedules to fit breakfast schedules.

CONNECTICUT

Fewer than five percent of Connecticut's public schools offer breakfast, although more than 95 percent participate in the National School Lunch Program. Both programs caused controversy in many Connecticut communities both because of fear of high costs and philosophical opposition.

As in other northeastern cities, many of Connecticut's older, urban schools have inadequate facilities and food must be transported, or satellited, from central facilities, requiring workers whose pay scales are higher than those of cafeteria workers. Additionally, the food service personnel are generally unionized and therefore receive higher wages than their counterparts in other areas of the country.

The fear of high costs, fueled by widespread resentment

from middle-class "taxpayers' associations" that see school lunch and breakfast as "giveaway programs," has led many school boards to reject school meals. While labor costs are high, however, the total cost of serving school breakfast in Connecticut is not greater than the available federal reimbursement. What's needed is more leadership from the state school food office in publicizing the availability of especially needy reimbursements and in improving district management abilities.

One additional impediment to school breakfast in Connecticut is the fear of lawsuits. The lunch programs in Bridgeport and Hartford were expanded to all schools when equal protection lawsuits were won declaring that a district must offer lunch in all schools if it is offered in one school. Fearing similar lawsuits if they try breakfast programs, school board members and administrators in many districts have elected not to make breakfast available in any schools.

● Stamford

Stamford has no breakfast program, and breakfast is not an issue. There was a pilot breakfast program in 1971, but it was dropped because of busing problems and low participation. There is opposition to breakfast, but it has not crystallized because there is no immediate prospect of a program getting under way soon.

School lunch has, for several years, been a topic of debate in Stamford. Programs that had existed since the forties were dropped in 1971 after poor management led to cost overruns. Yearly campaigns to reinstitute a hot lunch program met with no success despite support by the school board. The board of representatives (analogous to a city council), which has the final vote on school expenditures, turned down the lunch program each year, citing costs as the reason. Administration officials indicated the opposition was more likely based upon prejudice and maintained that, while financing of lunch has been a problem, the school district is not in financial difficulty.

In the spring of 1977, a broadly based coalition

including school officials, community workers and representatives of a food service company conducted a low-key campaign to reinstate lunch. The board of representatives relented, and, after a brief delay, the program began operating once again.

● Hartford

All schools in Hartford have lunch programs because of court-ordered expansion. While there is some resentment about the extent to which the district subsidizes school lunch, it is not a major issue.

The main controversy in Hartford is expansion of school breakfast. The city council favors expanding the program from the three schools that presently have it to all the schools in the city. To that end, they appropriated $82,000 for breakfast expansion. The school board turned it down, however, claiming that the breakfast program would generate continuing costs and that there was no guarantee the city council would be as generous in future years. The chief obstacle seems to be the widespread misconception that the ruling in the Hartford school lunch lawsuit would also apply to school breakfast and that the district must offer the program in all or none of its schools.

The board is unwilling to take on breakfast in all schools for a variety of reasons: fear of costs and union demands; concern with inadequate facilities; belief that breakfast is the responsibility of the home; and irritation that the city council took money away from the general education budget the board had approved, then found money for breakfast.

The district administration walked a fence. While giving credence to the board's scare stories about costs, they circulated a survey to parents to determine community support. Despite the survey's biased questions—"Would you want a breakfast program even if it meant fewer textbooks and teachers?"—a surprising 50 percent of the respondents were favorable to the program. The board has continued to reject school breakfast, however.

● New Haven

New Haven expanded its lunch program to all schools under threat of an equal protection lawsuit. The program had been heavily subsidized by the district in the past, and financing was an issue. By converting to pre-plated meal service to cut costs, however, school lunch is now an issue only to those parents who are concerned about the quality of the food their children are eating.

The only breakfast programs in New Haven are in the Head Start Program. Head Start personnel actively sought the program, but school administrators have not. Because no organized community group has asked for breakfast, it is not a controversial subject, although some members of the administration are attitudinally opposed to the program.

Fear of lawsuits has also impeded school breakfast in New Haven. The local school food director told us she turned down a principal's request for breakfast because she was concerned about equal protection laws.

MAINE

Maine has a state law requiring lunch to be offered in all schools. Because most schools were already serving lunch when the mandate was passed, implementation has been relatively smooth. Of the state's 826 public schools, 746 offer lunch.

There are 139 schools with breakfast programs in the state, and at the time of our visit there was no controversy over the program. Since then, however, a breakfast mandate has been introduced into the state legislature and defeated in committee. Opposition to school breakfast is based largely upon concern for family life. An additional factor in Maine is fear on the part of some local administrators that once they join the program the federal government will pull out and they will be left with an obligation they cannot afford. This fear is based upon an

experience during the early days of school breakfast, when the government changed the rules, hurting the local districts financially.

● Portland

School lunch has been a problem in Portland, although not a major one. Facilities are ancient or nonexistent, and a building moratorium has kept the administration from correcting the situation. A central kitchen is being built to provide lunch for more schools, however. At present, 18 of the district's 26 schools have lunch programs.

Ironically, school breakfast has been no problem at all. In fact, 22 schools will offer breakfast this fall. School breakfast is 99.9 percent reimbursed in Portland, but the lunch program is running about $100,000 to $125,000 in the red—a figure that translates into a cost to the taxpayers of 15 cents for every lunch served. Breakfast implementation has been facilitated by adequate reimbursements, by an obvious need for the programs and by an administration sensitive to the needs of the students and willing to take on the extra work involved in meeting them.

● Waterboro

Waterboro is resting on the laurels of its outstanding lunch program. School breakfast has not been seriously discussed and none of the eight schools offer it, although over half the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The opposition to breakfast expressed by those we interviewed were mild. They could see many positive aspects of the breakfast program, and it appeared likely that they would probably put up little resistance to outside pressure for implementation. The major obstacle in Waterboro seems to be a lack of initiative.

MASSACHUSETTS

Until recently under state law in Massachusetts, all schools were required to serve lunch and those schools with prescribed minimum numbers of needy children also had to offer breakfast. Of the 2,394 public schools in the state, 2,346 participate in the National School Lunch Program, and 732 were in the School Breakfast Program.

Controversy over school breakfast in Massachusetts, based upon claims that it costs too much and will break down the family, has been intense. Establishment of school breakfast was opposed at the district level before the law and opposition crystallized after its passage. The opposition spread statewide and reached a hysterical pitch; over the past two years, countless bills to rescind the mandate were introduced in the state legislature. And, finally, the state mandate was virtually abolished in July, 1978.

There were several factors that played a part in creating the confusion and chaos. First, the timing of the law was unfortunate. It followed similar mandates for special education and kindergartens that had placed heavy financial burdens on local districts. Second, the mandate stirred up resentment because it discriminated against small cities. And, finally, the mandate was minimally enforced. The state board of education, the state legislature and the state school food director have wavered in their support, backing down at one time and reasserting themselves at another. As a result of all these factors, the mandate remained in limbo. While some administrators quietly implemented the program, others defied the law. Many made wild claims about the potential costs of the program.

To determine whether local costs are a true barrier, or merely a smokescreen covering attitudinal objections to breakfast, a quick look at the relative financial support provided is helpful. While most states provide no direct subsidy, Massachusetts provides an average of ten percent above federal reimbursements. The state has liberal especially needy guidelines, and the state school

food services staff also makes a point of giving schools "advice on how to use the rules to get the most money," in contrast to many state offices that sometimes act as self-appointed guardians of the federal treasury.

● Amesbury

All four Amesbury schools have lunch programs and they cause no controversy. The high school has a breakfast program that runs without a hitch. Expansion has been resisted by the administration, however. There has been little community pressure for expansion, in part because the former superintendent blasted the mandate in his weekly newspaper column, telling townspeople they could get out of breakfast if they could demonstrate that it would cost too much or that there was no community support. To gauge support, he then distributed a questionnaire that contained questions such as, "Would you send your child to school for breakfast rather than feeding the child at home?"

The administrative opposition is based upon the minor inconveniences involved in expanding the program, anti-federalism and the belief that it is not the school's responsibility to feed children.

● Boston

Boston has had school lunch since before the beginning of the National School Lunch Program. Although decrepit facilities cause problems, lunch is not controversial. School breakfast has been around a while, too. It went through some growing pains before it was fully established in all schools, but it is not now an issue. The Massachusetts breakfast mandate, passed in 1972, doubled the number of Boston schools in the program so that two-thirds were offering breakfast. The final third came into the program when a broader mandate was passed in 1976.

The chief objections to school breakfast came from

teachers and principals. Teachers did not want to be involved in the program in any way and went so far as to file a grievance with their union to avoid supervising children during mealtimes. The union turned them down. Principals did not want to be bothered with rearranging schedules or listening to teachers complain about supervision. Many also were uninterested in food service and saw no connection between school breakfast and education.

It seems clear that most schools that participated voluntarily were doing so when the mandate forced the remaining schools in. As a result of the law, some principals who were bitter opponents before they started breakfast programs became staunch supporters after they were forced to take a look at the effect the program had on children. In addition to the school breakfast mandate, implementation was facilitated because leadership came from the state and local school food directors, the program is 100 percent self-supporting and community support was well organized.

● Worcester

Worcester has lunch in all its schools. The lunch program is running a deficit, and it exists only as a convenience so the schools will not have to shut down while students go home to eat. The program is not controversial. It gets minimal support from an administration that not only ignored a USDA program review finding that the school food services staff was short by four people, but subsequently cut back the staff by two slots.

Of Worcester's 63 schools, only 38 have breakfast, although 48 were required to offer it under the state mandate. Although the breakfast program is self-supporting, expansion is an issue, and the administration seems to be prepared to wait until court action is threatened before taking any steps toward compliance. While costs are cited as the justification for the opposition, that argument is not borne out because the breakfast program now costs the district nothing.

MONTANA

While 580 of Montana's 821 public schools are in the National School Lunch Program, only 100 are in the breakfast program. The majority of schools without lunch programs have tiny enrollments; many are ranch schools where the ten or 12 children from within a convenient distance come to a centrally located ranch and are taught by one teacher. At lunchtime many students simply sit down to eat with the ranch hands.

The state school food director says people object to the breakfast program because they are reluctant to take on more work. We also found strong anti-federalism sentiments hinder the breakfast program in Montana. Because it is a federal program, school breakfast has an unappealing image to some people we interviewed. We were struck by the overwhelming percentage of respondents who were born and raised in the state (nine of ten) and by the distrust of "outsiders" exhibited by many of the people with whom we spoke.

A we-take-care-of-our-own theme ran through the interviews. In fact, the state school food director told us that he sends breakfast reimbursement money back to USDA, even though schools are entitled to it and need it. This is done in part, we were told, because the state school food office lacks the capacity to determine how much each school should receive, but the state director also told us he does it "to encourage efficiency." At the same time, however, it will discourage expansion of the program in local districts that are thinking about breakfast but are worried about having to shoulder extra costs they think they cannot afford.

The state director tries to walk a tightrope between the need for expansion and the need for local control. As a result, expansion is slow. He uses a soft sell approach and waits for local districts to take the initiative to invite him in. The cornerstone of his approach is to stress the benefits of the program for children of all backgrounds. He tries to remove the government-handout-to-the-needy

connotations, and the participation by paying students in many of the breakfast programs in the state far exceeds the national average.

● Butte

While some schools in Butte have had lunch programs for years, expansion to all 19 schools was not completed until recently, after parents and model cities neighborhood councils took the initiative. One controversy that arose was the shortening of the lunch break. Parents who were used to having their children come home at noon objected that there was no longer enough time for them to eat.

School breakfast also sparked a bit of controversy a few years ago when a principal who wanted the program talked to reporters about it. The superintendent, who has since left, criticized the principal for overstepping his authority and refused to start a program. While the principal involved would still like to have a breakfast program, none of the schools in Butte now serve breakfast.

The present superintendent sees nothing wrong with school breakfast, but he fears high costs. While the business manager, who prepared cost estimates on the program for the school board, which turned it down, says he feels they could "hack the breakfast reimbursement," he "personally [doesn't] think much of the program." The school board, after spending long hours worrying about the district's shaky finances, is leery of anything that will cost local money. Board members with whom we spoke did note that a large number of students could benefit from such a program, since about 45 percent of those in the lunch program get free or reduced-price meals.

One possible obstacle in Butte is a lack of communication. Because the superintendent and the business manager say different things about whether the federal reimbursements are adequate, and because no one has pushed for the program since the principal was reprimanded for his advocacy, the problem may be a

need to share information or ideas now that some time has passed and the superintendent who opposed school breakfast is gone.

● Missoula

In the past, school lunch was controversial in the Missoula high schools because the quality of the food was "atrocious," and the cafeteria ambiance was "dreadful." This situation has been resolved and the program is being expanded to all three schools in the high school district.

School breakfast was also established in all schools in the district when a new superintendent who had had experience with breakfast came to work. In the beginning, we were told, few people believed that there was any way to improve the lunch program or that a breakfast program was possible or advisable. Now, however, there are many enthusiastic supporters of the food services operation.

There were several factors that promoted the changes in the lunch program and the implementation of breakfast. First, although the business manager had philosophical objections to breakfast, he saw it as his duty to carry out the policies set by the superintendent and board. The school board also deferred to the superintendent because he was the only one who had firsthand knowledge that breakfast could work. Additionally, since principals and students were encouraged to participate in making the changes, they became boosters, and, since the breakfast programs were sold not as programs for the needy but as programs for everyone, students from all economic backgrounds participated. Finally, because the breakfast program costs the district very little, it was feasible.

NEBRASKA

Nebraska has the lowest participation rates in school food programs of any of the ten states we surveyed; only 62 percent of its 1,817 public schools have lunch programs, and only four percent have breakfast.

This seems to stem from strong opposition to federal programs in the state. The local authority issue is typified by the current battle over the reorganization of school districts—the biggest issue in education today in Nebraska. Not surprisingly, the majority of schools that have neither lunch nor breakfast are found in the many small school districts that have fewer than a hundred students, and it is these small districts that are reluctant to surrender their autonomy for consolidation and organization.

While we encountered more anti-welfare and anti-federalism sentiment in Nebraska than in the northeast and industrialized midwest, we did not find as much hostility toward school breakfast here. Many administrators questioned whether providing breakfast is a school's responsibility, but they do not seem staunchly opposed to the idea. This could be because the individuals we interviewed had some experience with breakfast; on the other hand, it is possible that the strong ties between the state's agricultural industry and the child nutrition programs, mentioned by the state director, serve to dilute the opposition because the shared benefit is recognized.

● Blair

School lunch is not an issue in Blair because the district has an excellent program with an impressive 85 percent participation in its five schools. The program is, however, expected to pay for itself.

School breakfast has not been controversial in Blair, but the only experience with it is an annual breakfast put on by the food service director as a special event. The director feels that because only 150 to 200 of the 900

children enrolled participated in last year's event, a full-scale breakfast program is not warranted. This is a disappointment to her because she is looking for new ways to expand food services.

While the superintendent has reservations about the extent of the school's responsibility to its pupils and foresees busing adjustments, it is unlikely that he would resist breakfast if the local director wanted to go ahead, provided, however, that the program would pay for itself.

In Blair, the erroneous perception that 20 percent participation in school breakfast indicates failure is probably all that stands in the way of having a program.

● Scottsbluff

School lunch, available in all of Scottsbluff's seven schools, has caused controversy in the past, usually because of alleged discrimination against students who received free and reduced-price meals. In the past, the district also offered breakfast in the neediest schools and served an elaborate menu with bacon, eggs, toast, milk and juice. Although the program broke even, it was discontinued because participation was low.

While school officials cite disappointing participation as proof of lack of community interest or need, the dropping of a program that cost them nothing, created jobs and benefited at least a few low-income children, suggests an insensitivity to need, since nearly 45 percent of the students participating in Scottsbluff's lunch programs receive free and reduced-price meals.

● Walthill

Walthill's one school has had a lunch program for years. The only complaints have been by some school officials who feel that the families of children who receive free lunch are not really needy, as their applications claim, and by former students who say that the quality of the food could be improved.

Walthill once had a breakfast program that was dropped, school officials said, because of low participation. In any case, there is no real public opposition to school breakfast in Walthill. The problem is more a matter of failure to properly assess the need for a program and of the absence of any initiative to start one.

School officials who have since left felt they were reaching the wrong students with the program even though two-thirds of the students participating in the lunch program at the Walthill school receive their meals free or at a reduced price. It seems likely the belief that farm children are well-fed and are not needy helped shape officials' views, although many of these children are from families that are land rich but money poor. We also noted a tacit assumption that only Indian children are poor. Beyond realizing that all children can benefit from school breakfast, Walthill needs someone to take the initiative. The school board member we interviewed said it was up to the cooks, who said it was up to the board, and so on.

OHIO

Over 90 percent of Ohio's 4,344 public schools participate in the National School Lunch Program. Those schools without food service tend to be in affluent bedroom communities. School breakfast, available in 789 Ohio schools, has been controversial because of a state law enacted last year requiring the program in any school where at least one-third the enrollment is needy, or where a majority of parents request it. The breakfast mandate was enacted over Governor Rhodes' veto, when supporters convinced state legislators that the program increases the effectiveness of state money invested in education. Opposition to a mandated breakfast program came primarily from superintendents who feared additional costs and felt the choice was a matter for local control; they also asserted that breakfast was a responsibility better left to parents.

The potential impediments to school breakfast in Ohio loom larger because the state director feels "school breakfast doesn't really have that much to offer." His reservations are attitudinal:

> **I don't think it is the school's place to do it, but there's a job to be done . . . I guess I'm enough of an educator to feel that society can't abdicate its responsibility by placing it with the schools just because the kids have to go there.**

While the direction of school food programs in Ohio seems administratively efficient to us, administration, not outreach or technical assistance, appears to dominate the state's delivery of services. The state director was unable to elaborate on the problems and solutions of breakfast because his "touch with the schools is hit and miss," he told us. He has spent most of his time on the administrative structure and on setting up an automated accounting system.

While he believes in nutrition education, the Ohio director told us that he thinks "there's no such thing as a non-nutritious food" and that he was "impressed" by a Frito-Lay presentation equating the nutrients in potato chips with those in an apple. We were not surprised to discover he promotes *a la carte* food service, which does not meet Type A standards, and fortified, grain-fruit products that USDA is currently trying to phase out of the breakfast program because they teach children to eat sweets for breakfast.

● Kettering

Kettering has an oversized *a la carte* program in its 20 public schools. The children are being sold the junk food they like right in the cafeteria. This approach keeps the books balanced and the administrators happy.

The same thing is being done with breakfast. Although the schools are not participating in the federally funded School Breakfast Program, two of them serve *a la carte*

breakfasts. The majority of participants in this program are low-income children or children of two working parents. In other words, Kettering is selling breakfast to the very students the School Breakfast Program is intended to serve free or at low cost.

While the superintendent and business manager have no strong feelings for or against school breakfast, the local school food director has conflicting ideas about food services. On one hand, the *a la carte* program, which was in place before she became director, causes her no problems and adds money to the food services account; on the other hand, she told us, the federally sponsored School Breakfast Program would break down the family.

In addition, school breakfast is impeded in Kettering by the emphasis placed upon food service as a business rather than as a nutrition program. Participants are customers to be given whatever they will buy regardless of food value. Because administrators expect school food services to pay for themselves, *a la carte* food service is encouraged because it does not limit the amount of money the district can take in, as do the federal reimbursements.

● Springfield (Clark Northeastern District)

School lunch is not an issue in the Clark Northeastern District, although an argument could be made that many needy children are not being properly served by the program. Because of the extensive *a la carte* program, only those few children willing to accept the "free lunch" stigma eat the Type A meals that form the basis of the National School Lunch Program. Of the 4,300 children enrolled in the district, only 243 are approved for free meals and only 59 for reduced-price meals. The local director thinks that a lot of eligible children are not applying for free meals, but she does not know how many there are. The unusually high participation rate—about 98 percent—in the high school's lunch program is almost

totally *a la carte*. Only an average of 48 children eat a Type A lunch there each day.

School breakfast has definitely been an issue in this district. At one time there were two breakfast programs that ran perfectly after obstacles such as extensive busing were worked out. The superintendent, an avid fan of the program, proposed expanding it to a third school. The uproar that followed not only eliminated the possibility of expansion, it shut down the two existing programs. The opposition came from teachers who did not want to supervise children during school meals. The community said that breakfast is a family responsibility.

Under Ohio law, parents must be surveyed annually to determine whether they want a program. If half say "yes," a breakfast program is started. According to the Clark Northeastern District administration, 35 to 40 percent of the parents favored the program at the time it was withdrawn. The superintendent and food service director are now waiting for the community to take the initiative.

OREGON

School lunch is solidly entrenched in Oregon. Almost 90 percent of the public schools have lunch programs, and many have innovative lunch programs. Where no lunch program exists, it is usually because of finances, facilities or objections of administrators who do not want to get into the "restaurant business." Nearly all the schools without lunch programs are in small districts.

While school lunch is seen by many Oregon administrators as an integral part of the school day, breakfast is available in less than seven percent of the public schools in the state.

The barriers to breakfast programs that stood out most sharply in Oregon were complacency among local directors whose lunch programs are acclaimed, failure to perceive a need for the breakfast program based upon the assumption that it is only for "needy" children and the belief that "snack programs" for children are sufficient.

The state has tried to promote breakfast, but lunch

appears to be the focus of the state office. Expanding the type of service offered at lunch is seen as a more desirable expenditure of local energy.

● Beaverton

Beaverton has had school lunch for 17 years and has what may be the finest program in the nation. In ten of the 27 elementary schools, lunch is served family style. The children take turns playing host and hostess to their classmates, and, in the process, acquire valuable social and motor skills. Children are encouraged to work in the cafeteria to eliminate the stigma attached to kitchen work and to expose them to adults in a variety of roles; they learn that all work has value and to avoid stereotyping people and economic classes. The administration sees food service as an integral part of the school day, and the school board passed a resolution proclaiming just that.

In light of this progressive activity, it is surprising that Beaverton does not offer school breakfast. A morning snack is served at two schools to about 20 low-income children. This food meets the requirements for federal reimbursement, but they have not applied for it; instead, students are charged 15 cents.

School breakfast is impeded in Beaverton by the perception that the program is for needy children only, by the assumption that it should be offered in all schools or none, by the requirement to adjust either the beginning time of classes or a triple-routed bus schedule, by an innovative lunch program that is the focus of administrators' attention (and perhaps an excuse to bask in its success) and by the notion that it is up to someone else to initiate breakfast. As the local food service director, who has exhibited remarkable creativity and initiative with the lunch program, told us: "If the school committees wanted it, they'd let us know."

● Florence

The Siuslaw District in Florence, with five schools and an enrollment of 1,395, is the largest Oregon district serving neither lunch nor breakfast to its students. There has been a special milk program for about nine years with no problems and minimal expense.

The chief obstacle to school lunch, said the superintendent, is lack of facilities. Because the population of the district includes many elderly people with limited incomes and little interest in the schools, school budgets have been difficult to pass. Two proposals to build central facilities for a hot lunch program were turned down by tight-fisted voters, and community support is not substantial enough to prevail upon any such future votes. Additional obstacles to school lunch are a superintendent who does not see lunch as a priority, the notion that an expensive bulk facility is the only solution and district officials who do not recognize a correlation between good nutrition and education.

School breakfast is also impeded by all these factors and, in addition, by the superintendent's "personal, philosophical" opposition to it.

● Grants Pass

Grants Pass has lunch in all of its eight schools. The high school program is regarded as a model of good management and imagination. The food is well-prepared and attractively displayed, and the cooks reported they have no trouble getting students to eat such things as spinach.

The high school also offers a very complete breakfast menu. This program is supported by nearly everyone, but no one thinks it is possible to expand the program to the other schools.

The stated obstacle to expansion is busing, but no one has taken the initiative to solve the problem. Breakfast expansion is also hindered by the temptation to be satisfied with an outstanding lunch program and by the

personal reservations of the business manager, who told us the schools are being asked to do too much these days, although he would probably not stand in the way of promotion by others.

● Medford

Medford has had school lunch for 30 years, and administrators told us the program is running in the black. In recent years, they built one school and rebuilt another, after a fire, without cafeterias. These schools are served by satellite food programs. Aside from the unwillingness of voters to fund the construction of facilities, there seems to be no impediment to lunch and all 18 schools are in the program.

School breakfast, on the other hand, is faced with several obstacles. While the food service director, the district's federal program coordinator and a small band of nutrition advocates favor school breakfast, the superintendent, business manager and auxiliary services manager are lukewarm at best. Their logistical objections range from the usual busing problems to the spectre of expanding facilities. All three also have reservations based upon the belief that it is the family's responsibility to provide breakfast.

Several factors might facilitate school breakfast in Medford. District officials recognize that a lot of needy students would benefit, and the administrators assume that participation in breakfast would be high. Additionally, the food service director believes in the breakfast program and would like to try it. The program is blocked by a lack of initiative, however, and by the attitudinal resistance of those who control the purse strings and bus schedules.

SOUTH CAROLINA

All of South Carolina's 1,087 public schools have lunch programs, and 389 serve breakfast as well. School lunch has long been accepted here, as in much of the south, and almost all schools have been built with cafeterias. Many districts in the state offered lunch to their students even before the federal government began providing assistance.

School breakfast, on the other hand, has had a checkered history in South Carolina. Seeing the need for expansion of the School Breakfast Program in the state, a legislator attached a breakfast mandate onto an appropriations bill in the waning hours of the 1975 General Assembly. When the law passed, heavy resistance set in, with statewide protests and open defiance by other legislators and school administrators. When the authority for the appropriations bill ran out, the breakfast law was not reinstated.

Although the mandate was unpopular and went largely unenforced, the number of schools with breakfast programs increased dramatically. A few schools that had initiated breakfast because of the mandate dropped the program when it was no longer required. Others kept the program, so that the number of schools with breakfast is double what it was before the state law was enacted.

The state school food director grudgingly agrees that the mandate probably helped bring more schools into the program, but he favors local control. He told us he sympathizes with local administrators and feels that the complex USDA regulations hinder expansion of school breakfast.

● Lexington County—District II

Lexington County District II has lunch programs in all 16 schools. While the county provides some services through its food service director, the principals have the

chief responsibility for food services; they are not happy about it.

The district has no breakfast programs. The superintendent told us, "Our excuses are, one, we don't need it, which is almost legitimate, and, two, we don't think it's our business to feed the students." The chairman of the school board shared the superintendent's view that breakfast was not the school's responsibility. Other members of the administration, who did not cite philosophical opposition, saw other obstacles to school breakfast that could be surmounted if the community pressed for a program.

● Spartanburg

All 15 public schools in Spartanburg have lunch programs, and 11 have breakfast programs. The district has had both programs for years. Some Spartanburg schools had breakfast before the 1975 law; after it was passed, all the schools in the district started breakfast programs. The principal of a school that had previously dropped the program told us enthusiastically about solving his supervision problems the second time around. After the law died and the program became optional once more, this principal told us there was "no way" he would drop it again.

School breakfast in Spartanburg has been facilitated by the state law, the local school food director's aggressive promotion of it and the district administration's support for the program. The administration has told the principals, "You don't have to [serve breakfast], but we feel you should."

WISCONSIN

Although 1,997 of Wisconsin's 2,138 schools have lunch programs, only 118 schools serve breakfast. We encountered the usual obstacles, with emphasis upon the question of "the school's proper role." In addition, we found the question of local control and a failure to perceive the need for school breakfast to contribute significantly to the resistance to school breakfast. Outreach is limited by state policies and there is little initiative for greater efforts.

● Madison

School lunch has been an issue for some time in Madison. In the past, the controversy centered on expanding the program. The program was finally extended to all 47 schools but only after the one woman on the school board made a plea for school lunch to help working mothers.

More recently, the issue has been the universally acknowledged poor quality of the lunches and the poor management of the program. The district was ready to hire a food management company to take over the program when a kickback scandal erupted. A business-oriented manager was being sought when we visited the district.

There are no school breakfast programs in Madison, and breakfast has not been an issue, apparently because of lack of discussion. As a result of the relatively low number of financially needy students, no need for the program has been seen by the administration, and the community has not requested breakfast. The superintendent is categorically opposed to it and says breakfast is not the school's responsibility.

The problems with the lunch program and the opposition to the breakfast program stem from related causes. Just as the superintendent sees school breakfast as outside the school's responsibility, the administration fails to perceive school lunch as an integral part of the

educational system. Instead, it is seen as a necessary evil—a service provided to minimize the disruption of school schedules at midday; coincidentally, it provides a service to working mothers and the low-income youngsters in attendance, but its primary function is to serve as a feeding station. This view of the purposes and potential of school feeding is the main obstacle to quality school lunch programs and school breakfast in Madison.

● Milwaukee

Milwaukee is an anomaly. The district's lunch program has been widely acclaimed because it serves wholesome Type A meals designed in part by students, at the low price of 35 cents in all schools. While some members of the administration and the school board are unhappy over the inflexibility of the program and the extensive district subsidy required to keep down the cost to middle-class students, school lunch is not an issue; it seems likely, however, that if it were not for the good publicity the program generates, the costs to the district would be controversial.

In spite of the food service director's reputation as the king of school lunch, he is the breakfast program's major opponent. He ran a breakfast program for about two years, but deemed it a failure and dropped it. None of the district's 155 schools now serve breakfast. While the director cited excessive costs as the barrier to breakfast, the cost estimates he prepared were based upon a meal pattern that exceeded USDA requirements. He told us he thinks the solution to feeding hungry children is parental education and back-up food service in the churches.

We learned that when breakfast was first tried, the director had expressed great hopes for it, but he was disillusioned when it did not live up to his expectations. It seems likely that the following factors played a part in his decision to cancel the program. First, although the breakfast participation rates were comparable to those in most other districts and higher than those in the church-sponsored breakfast programs in Milwaukee preceding the School Breakfast Program, the director was

disappointed that participation rates were not as impressive as those in his lunch program. Second, because breakfast menus were more elaborate than necessary, costs were higher and cut into the amount of local subsidy available for lunch. And, finally, when students ate the substantial breakfasts provided by the schools, they were not as hungry at lunchtime, and, consequently, were less enthusiastic about the food provided in the lunch program.

Despite support by numerous community groups and the superintendent, the food director holds so much sway over the school board that he has single-handedly stood in the way of school breakfast for Milwaukee's students, a large number of whom qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

6

RECOMMENDATIONS

What a great opportunity we have. So many programs in this nation are missing that point and missing this opportunity, it's a shame. This should be one of our national objectives. We have the greatest opportunity in the world because we have the best medium to create the kind of climate in school food services where a young woman or a young man can enjoy a little dignity at mealtime. And if we don't use it, shame on us.

State School Food Director
Oregon

While this study shows there is not one reason why the breakfast program does not work, nor is there any one formula for success, one generalization can be made—when administrators want a school breakfast program, the program will succeed. As one state director told us, "There are no rules you can use to ensure effective implementation. You have to look at each community and

point out some of the problems they may run into . . . Our role is to tell them it can be done."

Tnere are a number of ways Congress, USDA and state and local administrators and educators can foster school breakfast programs. Based upon the information gathered in our study and upon nearly a decade of experience working to expand federal food assistance, The Children's Foundation makes the following recommendations.

At the National Level

Congress must mandate the availability of the School Breakfast Program.

Because only 20 percent of the nation's schools serve breakfast 12 years after the establishment of the School Breakfast Program, because so many millions of children need the program, because prejudice against it is so deep, it is the conviction of The Children's Foundation that the availability of the School Breakfast Program must be made mandatory by federal law. Congress has recommended it; Congress must now mandate it. By refusing to require a comprehensive program, Congress has failed.

A school breakfast mandate would operate much as does the recent legislation requiring the mainstreaming of handicapped students into public schools or as do the state laws requiring lunch to be served in the public schools of 12 states. Child nutrition advocates agree that federal law should require breakfast in all schools where either 25 percent of the student body, or as many as 100 students, are *eligible* for free or reduced-price meals. Schools not complying would be subject to loss of administrative funds.

Not until the final day of floor action by the 95th

Congress did the child nutrition legislation reach the floor for a final vote. No breakfast mandate was in that piece of legislation. After 30 hours of continuous debate with the end of the congressional session fast approaching, it became apparent that unless all controversial provisions were eliminated, the bill would not be brought to the floor at all. In a last ditch effort by Senate and House leaders to mold a noncontroversial piece of legislation, all mandatory school brekfast language was deleted.

The House bill had contained a combination of a breakfast mandate and three incentives; in the final bill, only the incentives remained. Eligibility requirements for determination of especially needy status have finally been standardized and taken out of the hands of state departments of education. Schools in which 40 percent or more of the lunches are served at free or reduced prices will be eligible to apply for especially needy status. As well, any school offering breakfast under local state mandates wil automatically be eligible for especially needy reimbursement rates. Equipment assistance has been increased from $40 million to $75 million, with 40 percent of this amount reserved for schools initiating school breakfast programs. Finally, a blending of the accounting procedures for school lunch and school breakfast was approved.

Although these incentives may stimulate some breakfast participation increase, we are not optimistic. A review of state plans indicates that some states already have set their especially needy rate at the 40 percent level; despite the authorization of $75 million for equipment assistance, only $24 million was actually appropriated; and, although the legislation calls for the merging of accounting procedures for the school meal programs, only after USDA has determined how this can be done will its worth to breakfast expansion be determined.

The incentives, standing alone, are clearly not strong enough to modify the negativism toward school breakfast. Only a federal mandate will produce meaningful program participation increases. Because the prejudices against school breakfast are so ingrained, school breakfast will remain a missed opportunity without congressional

insistence. Congress must take the leadership that so many federal, state and local officials have failed to provide.

The Department of Agriculture must actively promote the School Breakfast Program.

While a stronger national law would automatically expand school breakfast, a mandate by itself would be meaningless unless USDA affirmatively carried out the law. USDA has had the obligation of promoting the program, yet interviewees told us, "USDA has been invisible on breakfast." USDA's activities must include the following:

- publicizing the existence of the School Breakfast Program
- providing accurate, up-to-date information and technical assistance
- monitoring state plans and administration aggressively
- making the program as easy as possible to administer by reducing paperwork requirements and updating regulations to be responsive to local community needs
- working actively to end discrimination against needy children.

First of all, if no one knows about school breakfast, expansion is impossible. USDA must highly publicize the program to turn around the negatives—to remove the stigma from poor and needy children, to show that breakfast is a precondition to learning and to convince administrators, educators and the public at large that breakfast is a legitimate function of the schools. If school breakfast is to grow, USDA must launch an aggressive information campaign. Their tired promotional literature and their out-of-print public service messages that can only be seen on late-night television are not sufficient. At the very least, USDA must let the general public know that school breakfast exists. Every parent of every child

who might want to participate must know that there is a School Breakfast Program. This means communicating with parents in whatever languages they speak. It means stepping up their public relations effort with more television and radio spots. It does not mean relying upon the message contained in the big words in little print of the notice that may or may not make it home with children who are charged by the schools with delivering it to their parents.

USDA must provide adequate, up-to-date information and technical assistance to state and local school administrators. USDA should clear up common misunderstandings such as the idea that school breakfast is only for financially needy children or that there is no federal reimbursement for supervision or indirect costs. Administrators must be made aware of the difference between school lunch and school breakfast and know that breakfast can often pay for itself. For example, an embarrassing number of state school food directors believe that paying one school at "especially needy" rates of reimbursement necessitates paying another school at a rate lower than the regular reimbursements. While the regulations make it clear that this is not the case, we have heard this distortion voiced by many state directors who refuse to grant especially needy status to any schools, thereby discouraging or preventing some districts from putting breakfast in their schools. USDA must ensure that the new legislation is clearly understood by state and local administrators.

USDA must also help states develop outreach materials geared to specific audiences. Such materials could be used as vehicles for clearing up misunderstandings; they could also help officials at the local level overcome problems. In addition to developing its own materials, USDA should seek wider distribution of good public relations materials developed by the states—for example, the excellent publication, *School Breakfast in Florida: Some Facts for Decision Makers,* published by the state school food office in Florida.

Along with providing timely and accurate information, USDA must ensure that state school food offices are promoting breakfast. By closely monitoring the states'

annual school food plans, USDA could exert much more pressure on the states to do effective breakfast outreach. USDA must become visible on breakfast by setting minimum standards for outreach by the state departments of education and by enforcing those standards. Although the Department has recently begun to ask more of the states in what seems to indicate an interest in outreach, the Department should demand that state plans pinpoint target districts and detail the steps the state will take to bring more schools into the breakfast program. Each state should be required to have at least one fulltime breakfast outreach staff person.

USDA should also collect whatever statistics are necessary to determine the effectiveness of outreach efforts. The states now collect information that can easily be forwarded to USDA as part of their monthly reports. That information would enable the Department to tell, for instance, how many public schools have breakfast programs—something they cannot now do. A national survey of children's breakfast habits and a national survey to find the most effective ways to advertise the School Breakfast Program would greatly improve their planning and administration.

At the same time that USDA toughens its monitoring of the states, it must also strengthen its training and technical assistance to states and local districts. Currently too few of USDA's personnel are trained in the child nutrition programs; materials are slapdash and slipshod; information is too often inaccurate. Visually pleasing, factually accurate training materials must be produced and distributed. The number as well as the quality of training sessions must be increased.

Among other things, the Department must provide more guidance on improving the quality of school meals. Working through the states, USDA should help food services personnel to change students' eating habits. Many schools we visited managed to lure children into breakfast with whole-grain muffins and into lunch with crisp, steamed vegetables. The Department should pass along these secrets to the legion of cafeteria workers who cluck their tongues when children turn up their noses at soggy canned vegetables and who shake their heads and

announce that "kids won't eat anything but presweetened cereal" for breakfast. Most districts we visited could benefit from learning of the success stories and replicating them.

USDA should take action to make school breakfast easier to administer and, therefore, more attractive to those who are considering establishing programs. First, there is considerable room to improve the delivery of commodity foods to schools so that two tons of cranberries don't arrive the day before Christmas vacation or a boxcar of frozen french fries the week before school closes for the summer. Second, the reduction of paperwork requirements of the school breakfast amendments enacted November 10, 1977, should be implemented with speed, imagination and determination.

The Department should also tighten and enforce regulations prohibiting discrimination against children who receive free and reduced-price meals. Aside from the devastating effect that being identified as needy can have on children, the Department's free and reduced-price policies do not comply with the law because, by allowing for collection of ticket money in homerooms, the regulations invite overt identification. USDA should do more than sit back and wait for the most outrageous examples of discrimination to come to their attention. They must exhibit leadership and demonstrate clearly, once and for all, that absolutely no discrimination will be tolerated in the school food programs.

At the State Level

States must aggressively facilitate expansion of the School Breakfast Program.

As a first step, state school food directors should assign at least one fulltime staff member to promote the School Breakfast Program. In our survey, Arizona was the only state with a fulltime breakfast outreach worker. It is too easy to ignore school breakfast when outreach is subordinated to state monitoring of school lunch programs and when promotional responsibility is split among several staff members.

In addition to conducting an information campaign to generate public enthusiasm for the program and to educate the educators about the need for school breakfast, state outreach workers should try to start new breakfast programs instead of waiting for local officials to take the initiative. While state directors may not be able to force a district to accept the program, it is certainly within their purview and, indeed, within their responsibility to inform local administrators that they need school breakfast if a high number of their students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Most directors we interviewed were extremely hesitant about being too "pushy" with local administrators. In fact, Casa Grande, Arizona, was one of the very few districts where we were told someone from the state school food office had informed local officials that the district needed a breakfast program. In any event, there is a difference between being pushy and providing leadership, as we learned in Spartanburg, South Carolina. A principal there told us how he came to have a breakfast program: "The district said, 'You don't have to, but we feel you should.' "

As a second step, we recommend that state directors strengthen the training and technical assistance they give local districts. In this regard, the states must demand

more from USDA in areas where they lack expertise and obtain or prepare training materials that can be used at the state and local levels. The quality of the training offered by the states we visited was extremely uneven. Some state offices had sophisticated audiovisual tools and extensive training programs. Others, which appeared to be more interested in their administrative functions, reluctantly held one or two workshops a year and relied upon superficial newsletter articles to do their training.

In most states there is a need to reach the small and remote districts that often need the most help but get the least. We were frequently told that the "people in state offices are really helpful, but they're so busy we don't like to bother them unless it's really important." There is a great need for specific training in management, nutrition and high quality food preparation at the local level. These are all skills that, with help from USDA, states could and should assist districts in acquiring.

Finally at the state level, departments of education should provide greater support for school food divisions. In many of the states we visited, the state directors had specific orders from elected state superintendents not to "make waves" or do anything that would alienate voters. State superintendents had cut back school food service staff in more than one state we visited, and in only two states, Arizona and Massachusetts, did we see evidence that the state departments of education were actively trying to help the school food offices expand the breakfast programs. As leaders, state boards of education and superintendents must show their support for the breakfast program and thereby set an example for the local administrators and board members who look to them for guidance.

At the Local Level

The role of school food programs must be reassessed.

Educators and administrators must reassess the role of school food programs. Like the principal who told us, "School breakfast is one of the single best things the government has done," many educators realize that the program is a wise investment of federal dollars because it prepares students for learning by fueling their minds and bodies. But most administrators who have not seen the benefits of school breakfast do not understand its value.

Not only does a breakfast program give students who do not get an adequate breakfast a chance to start the school day in the same state as their better-fed classmates, but it also gives the schools a unique chance to provide nutrition education. Many of the administrators we interviewed felt that nutrition education was a proper role for the schools even if they did not want to feed children. Few recognized, however, that school lunch and breakfast programs are nutrition education. They are the most effective means of teaching students what they should eat to stay healthy. That many administrators are unaware of this aspect of school food programs is evident in what they sometimes offer students for breakfast and lunch.

School food programs also provide an excellent opportunity for positive public relations. Good lunch and breakfast programs create an impression that affects the way children approach their school work and the way their parents and the community feel about the school system.

Schools must make the best possible use of the nutrition education monies available through Section 19 of P.L. 95-166.

In light of the need for increased awareness of good health and nutrition, Congress appropriated $26.2 million expressly for nutrition education. The monies will be available for the first time this fall, 1978. Congress intends this money to be used for nutritional and food service management training for educational and food service personnel and nutrition education activities in schools and other child care institutions. School breakfast can play an important role in this new effort.

The community must involve itself.

Everywhere we went, it was evident that leadership and initiative were essential to a good breakfast program. Students, parents, school personnel and administrators must become more involved in school food services. There are many ways a community can become involved: school breakfast committees can be formed; public information campaigns can be conducted; public service announcements can be aired on local television and radio stations; meetings can be called to discuss suggestions about school foods; and advisory committees of students and parents can participate in food planning and program management.

Imaginative, indepth training of food service workers is necessary. When everyone has a greater stake in a food program, it will show up in meal quality and student participation. Continuing training also improves job skills, promotes professionalism and provides economic development for communities. Feeding children can nourish an entire community.

FOOTNOTES

I. THE NEED FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST

[1]Read, Merrill S., *Malnutrition, Learning and Behavior.* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, DHEW Publication No. (NIH) 76-1036, Bethesda, MD, 1976.

[2]Fine, Paul A., "Modern Eating Patterns—The Structure of Reality." Paper prepared for the American Medical Association Food Science Council Symposium on Eating Patterns and Their Influence on Purchasing Behavior and Nutrition, November, 1971.

[3]Massachusetts Department of Education, Bureau of Nutrition Education and School Food Service, 1969.

[4]State Senate Subcommittee on Education, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Education, industry and local schools, 1977.

[5]The Cereal Institute, Inc., *The Breakfast Source Book.* Chicago, IL, 1966.

[6]Read, *op. cit.*

[7]Pollitt, Ernesto, et. al., "Educational Benefits of the United States School Feeding Program: A Critical Review of the Literature." *The American Journal of Public Health,* 68:477-481, 1978.

[8]McDonald's corporate headquarters, Chicago, IL, April, 1978.

FOOTNOTES (cont'd)

III. THE OBSTACLE COURSE

[1]By law in Ohio, if one-third the enrollment of a school is "needy," or if one-half the parents in the district want the program, school breakfast is mandatory.

IV. PREJUDICES AGAINST SCHOOL BREAKFAST

[1]Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Children of Working Mothers*. 1975.

[2]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Female Family Heads*. Series P-23, No. 50, 1973.

[3]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*. Series P-60, No. 103, 1976.

[4]Public Law 94-105, 89 Stat. 511, veto overridden October 7, 1975.

APPENDIX I.

A SUCCESS STORY

A SUCCESS STORY

The Breakfast Program Longfellow Elementary School Great Falls, Montana

In December, 1977, two advocacy groups in Great Falls, Montana, petitioned the superintendent and school board for a breakfast program. The same request had been voiced before, but always in letters from individual parents and never in sufficient numbers to command the board's attention. This time something happened. The District School Food Supervisor was told to go ahead and start serving breakfast at Longfellow Elementary School—provided the program could be introduced at no additional cost to the district or school.

Less than a month later, children were eating their first breakfast in the school cafeteria. "At first," said the District Supervisor, "I hesitated to take the responsibility away from parents. But now, after seeing the results, I'm one hundred percent in favor of it."

There were no start-up costs and virtually no problems setting up the program. Longfellow has a cafeteria and, although lunches are prepared elsewhere and brought in, the school has a bakery complete with ranges, mixers and ovens. It was a simple matter to use the bakery's facilities for breakfast preparation. The same part-time employees who work in the bakery and in the cafeteria at lunchtime were hired to serve breakfast. Breakfast requires an additional nine person hours a day, divided among the four workers. "They were more than happy to come in early," the supervisor told us.

Clean-up proved to be no problem either. Paper goods are used to eliminate labor costs. Cafeteria workers have observed that students are better behaved and neater at breakfast than at lunch, "when they've been cooped up for a while."

Breakfast is served from 7:45 to 8:30 a.m., "but if any children arrive early we serve them as early as 7:30," the

supervisor said. No change in bus schedules was required. The last bus arrives 15 minutes before class begins at 8:30. In winter, when buses sometimes arrive late, children are given an opportunity to eat by allowing them a 15-minute pass from their first class.

Average daily attendance at Longfellow is 431. The average daily participation in lunch is high—423, or 98 percent of the student body. Breakfast participation averages 179, or 42 percent. Seventy-seven percent of the students eating breakfast receive a free or reduced-price meal. Somewhat to the surprise of school authorities, the breakfast program has increased lunch participation.

The school has also been surprised to find out the federal reimbursement more than covers the school's costs. The average cost of food each day is $37.00; the average labor cost is $23.31; and the total average cost per day is $60.31. The federal reimbursement is $70.

The school's normal charge for breakfast is 15 cents. Students who qualify for a reduced rate pay ten cents. Before the program began, applications were sent to all parents to determine whether their children were eligible for normal, reduced or free rates. The applications were returned to the school principal, who sent them to the food service workers. Tickets were then prepared and each was filed in an envelope with the name of the participating child on it. The tickets are kept by the cashier in the cafeteria, and since all tickets are identical no one but the principal and the supervisor knows who is receiving free or reduced-price meals.

The supervisor told us there is little plate waste. "The children know ahead of time what the menu is and they don't show up if they don't like what's served. So, we've learned what not to serve. Hot cereal is the least favorite." The menus include: cold cereal, orange juice, fruit, milk, pancakes, french toast, scrambled eggs and muffins. Grilled cheese sandwiches are a favorite, and sometimes hot chocolate is served. There have been no complaints about food quality, either from the children or their parents.

Nutrition education has been concentrated only in grades one through three but will expand through sixth grade this fall. There is a part-time nutrition education

member on the district supervisor's staff who visits the elementary schools. Individual teachers are required to spend only one and a half hours on nutrition education per semester.

Breakfast is a success in Great Falls. In only one month, through the cooperation of the superintendent, the Longfellow principal and the cafeteria personnel, the District Supervisor was able to overcome fears that "breakfast will be a real headache." On the contrary, she says now, "It's been a success in every way."

APPENDIX II.

TABLES

Lunch Participation — Target Cities

TARGETS	# Public Schools	Total Enrollment	# Schools w/ Lunch	Enroll. in Schools w/ Lunch	Ave. Daily Participation in Lunch	% Participation in Lunch	# Students w/ F/RP Lunch	% of Enroll. w/ F/RP Lunch	% Total Schools w/ Lunch
Az.									
Casa Grande	6	4,394	6	4,394	2,582	58.8	1,312	29.9	100.0
Phoenix[1]	12	27,000	12	27,000	3,266	12.1	2,028	7.5	100.0
Ct.									
Hartford	32	25,474	32	25,474	17,397	68.3	16,057	63.0	100.0
New Haven	47	19,509	46	18,932	12,457	63.9	11,537	59.1	97.9
Stamford	23	17,506	23	17,506	7,133	40.7	3,229	18.4	100.0
Me.									
Portland	22	10,594	16	8,872	5,100	48.1	2,845	26.9	72.7
Waterboro	8	2,025	8	2,025	1,513	74.7	787	38.9	100.0
Ma.									
Amesbury	5	2,953	4	2,753	2,200	74.5	678	23.0	80.0
Boston	153	70,907	153	70,907	41,398	58.4	36,686	51.7	100.0
Worcester	62	26,062	62	26,062	11,335	43.5	7,678	29.5	100.0
Mt.									
Butte	19	8,100	19	8,100	3,300	40.7	1,485	18.3	100.0
Missoula[1]	3	4,300	3	4,300	1,587	36.9	232	5.4	100.0
Ne.									
Blair	5	2,000	5	1,725[4]	1,475	73.4	210	10.5	100.0
Scottsbluff	7	3,500	7	3,500	1,763	50.4	776	22.2	100.0
Walthill	1	345	1	345	225	65.2	150	43.5	100.0
Oh.									
Kettering	20	11,903	20	11,903	3,700	31.8	809	6.8	100.0
Springfield/Clark	7	4,300	7	4,300	1,127	26.2	180	4.2	100.0
Or.									
Beaverton	36	21,000	36	21,000	11,831	56.3	1,284	6.1	100.0
Florence	4	1,396	0	N/A[5]	N/A	0	N/A	0	0
Grants Pass	8	4,049	8	4,049	2,400	59.3	1,400	34.6	100.0
Medford	18	10,192	18	10,192	5,137	50.4	1,360	13.3	100.0
S.C.									
Lexington County	16	10,000	16	10,000	8,540	85.4	2,019	20.2	100.0
Spartanburg	15	11,632	15	11,632	8,949	76.9	4,621	39.7	100.0
Wi.									
Madison	47	29,500	47	29,500	8,700	29.5	2,400	8.1	100.0
Milwaukee	155	93,000	155	93,000	56,586	60.8	31,062	33.4	100.0

Breakfast Participation — Target Cities

TARGETS	# Public Schools	Total Enrollment	# Schools w/ B'fast	Enroll. in Schools w/ B'fast	Ave. Daily Participation in B'fast	% Participation in B'fast	# Students w/ F/RP B'fast	% Enroll. w/ F/RP B'fast	% Total Schools w/ B'fast
Az.									
Casa Grande	6	4,394	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Phoenix[1]	12	27,000	2	3,237	178	.7	72	.3	16.7
Ct.									
Hartford	32	25,474	6	2,193	1,616	6.3	1,553	6.1	18.8
New Haven	47	19,509	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Stamford	23	17,506	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Me.									
Portland	22	10,594	10	3,007	1,600	15.1	1,307	12.3	45.5
Waterboro	8	2,025	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Ma.									
Amesbury	5	2,953	1	815	1,500[2]	50.6	603	20.4	20.0
Boston	153	70,907	150	70,000	20,423	28.8	20,274	28.6	98.0
Worcester	62	26,062	45	11,956	3,241	12.4	3,221	12.4	72.6
Mt.									
Butte	19	8,100	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Missoula[1]	3	4,300	3[3]	4,300	721	16.8	139	3.2	100.0
Ne.									
Blair	5	2,000	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Scottsbluff	7	3,500	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Walthill	1	345	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Oh.									
Kettering	20	11,903	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Springfield/Clark	7	4,300	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Or.									
Beaverton	36	21,000	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Florence	4	1,395	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Grants Pass	8	4,049	1	1,426	100	2.5	75	1.9	12.5
Medford	18	10,192	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
S.C.									
Lexington County	16	10,000	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Spartanburg	15	11,632	11	5,555	2,307	19.8	2,050	17.6	73.3
Wi.									
Madison	47	29,500	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0
Milwaukee	155	93,000	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0

[1]High schools only.

[2]Students may buy more than one breakfast.

[3]'78 - '79 Double shift will close breakfast program.

[4]Kindergarten does not get lunch.

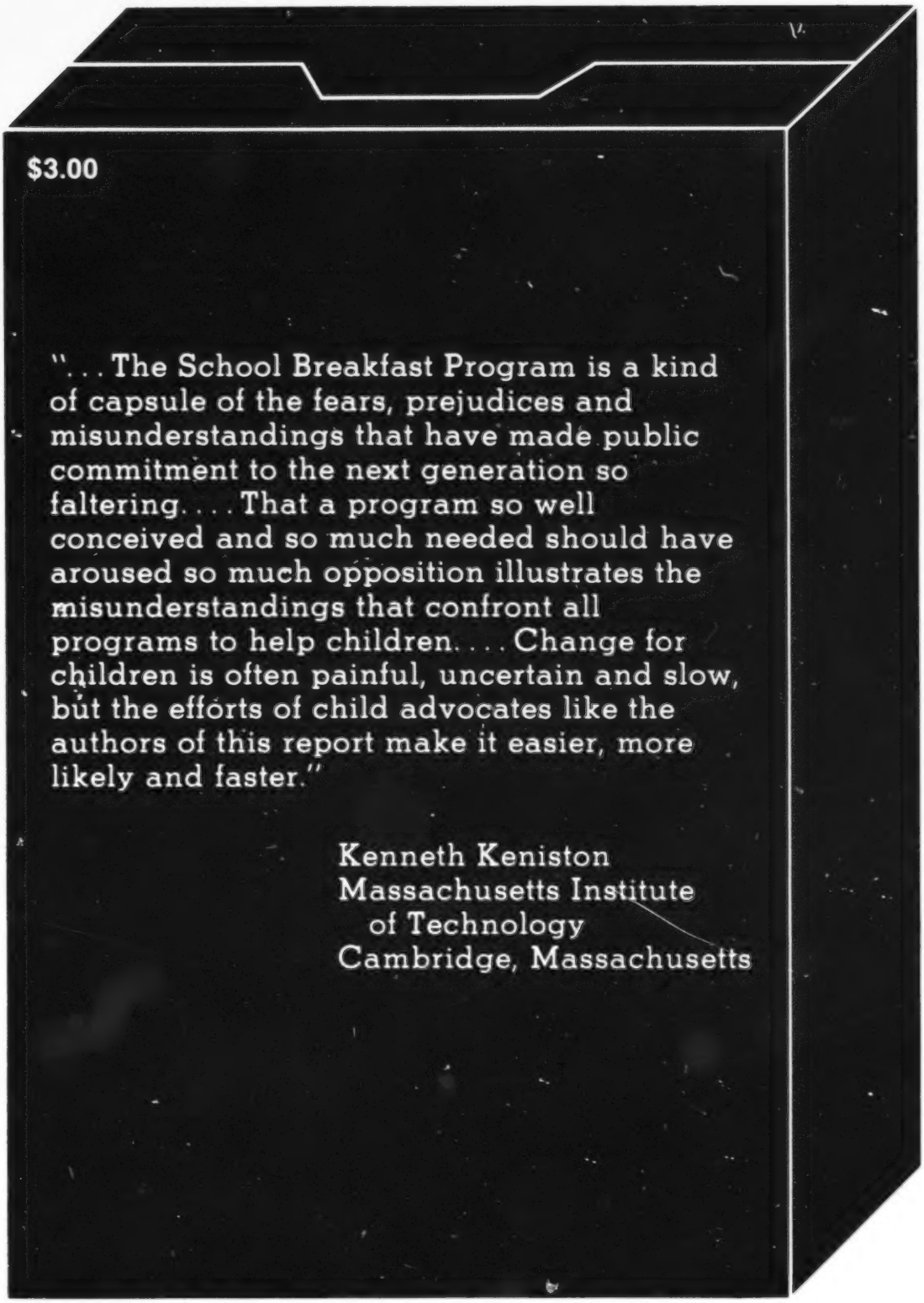
[5]Not available.

Lunch Participation — Target States

States	# Public Schools	Total Enroll.	# Schools w / Lunch	Enroll. in Sch. w/ Lunch	Ave. Daily Participation in Lunch	% Participation in Lunch	# Students w/ F/RP Lunch	% Enroll. w/ F/RP Lunch	% Total Schools w/ Lunch
Arizona	875	495,463	755	468,201	217,151	43.8	92,601	18.7	86.3
Connecticut	1,021	599,839	971	577,300	260,000	43.3	102,700	17.1	95.1
Maine	826	242,000	746	221,011	127,116	52.5	64,899	26.8	90.3
Massachusetts	2,394	1,119,147	2,346	1,112,658	620,194	55.4	217,068	19.4	98.0
Montana	821	170,350	580	158,600	82,800	48.6	35,000	20.5	70.6
Nebraska	1,817	300,743	1,126	291,087	199,902	66.5	38,753	12.9	62.0
Ohio	4,344	2,244,546	3,937	2,194,893	966,901	43.1	292,004	13.0	90.6
Oregon	1,285	461,136	1,148	441,247	237,209	51.4	107,227	23.3	89.3
S. Carolina	1,087	630,589	1,087	630,589	464,724	73.7	273,735	43.4	100.0
Wisconsin	2,138	923,968	1,997	855,058	420,042	45.5	112,332	12.2	93.4

Breakfast Participation — Target States

States	# Public Schools	Total Enroll.	# Schools w/ B'fast	Enroll. in Schools w/B'fast	Ave. Daily Participation in B'fast	% Participation in B'fast	# Students w/ F/RP B'fast	% Enroll. w/ F/RP B'fast	% Total Schools w/ B'fast
Arizona	875	495,463	254	147,702	27,416	5.5	21,518	4.3	29.0
Connecticut	1,021	599,839	22	14,948	1,567	.3	1,246	.2	2.2
Maine	826	242,000	139	37,375	10,007	4.1	7,920	3.3	16.8
Massachusetts	2,394	1,119,147	732	376,544	56,756	5.1	52,218	4.7	30.6
Montana	821	170,350	100	35,000	4,615	2.7	3,000	1.7	12.2
Nebraska	1,817	300,743	77	16,152	6,000	2.0	2,685	.9	4.2
Ohio	4,344	2,244,546	789	219,007	84,116	3.7	76,209	3.3	18.2
Oregon	1,285	461,136	86	32,890	7,548	1.6	5,540	1.2	6.7
S. Carolina	1,087	630,589	389	205,917	67,507	10.7	60,333	9.6	35.8
Wisconsin	2,138	923,968	118	45,800	12,340	1.3	4,601	.5	5.5


$3.00
". . . The School Breakfast Program is a kind of capsule of the fears, prejudices and misunderstandings that have made public commitment to the next generation so faltering. . . . That a program so well conceived and so much needed should have aroused so much opposition illustrates the misunderstandings that confront all programs to help children. . . . Change for children is often painful, uncertain and slow, but the efforts of child advocates like the authors of this report make it easier, more likely and faster."
Kenneth Keniston
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts